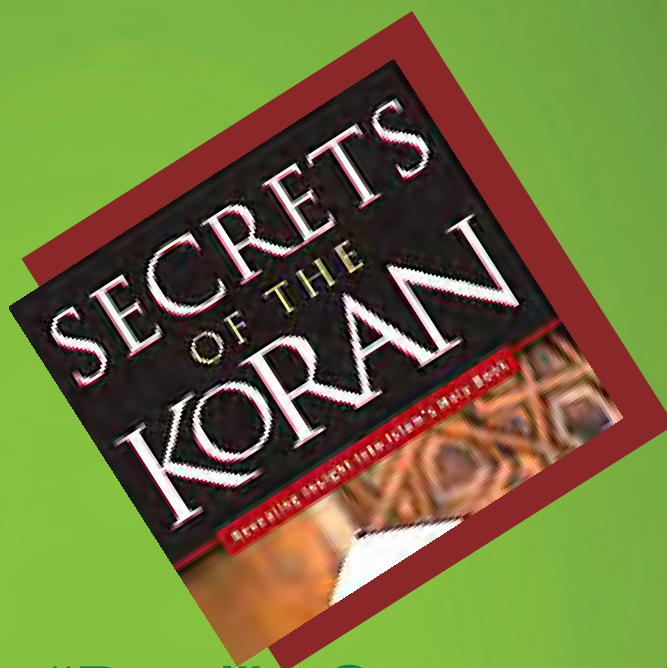


"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



An Invitation to "Real" Secrets of the
Holy Qur'an

17 Muhammad^{saw}
and the Jews of
Medina

22 War Verses in
the Holy Qur'an

30 Madrassas in
Islam

32 Polygamy in
the Holy Qur'an

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 189 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaeihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

Muslims who believe in the Messiah, Hazrat
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Qadiani^{AS}

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Mean-spirited Criticism

Correction Notice: The Winter 2009 issue featured a cover graphic representing Arabic calligraphy. However, some readers may have taken it to be a part of the Qur'an, which was not intended. We regret any confusion this may have caused, and in order to remove any confusion, we have revised the digital version of the issue, available online. -- **Editor**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Surah Luqman, 31:3-7

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ * هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِلْحُسَيْنِ *
الَّذِينَ يَقِیُّوْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ
هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ * أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ * وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُتْرَكُ لَّهُوَ الْحَدِيثُ
لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا
أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ *

[31:3] These are verses of the Book of Wisdom,

[31:4] A guidance and a mercy for those who do good,

[31:5] Those who observe Prayer and pay the Zakat and who have firm faith in the Hereafter.

[31:6] It is they who follow guidance from their Lord, and it is they who shall prosper.

[31:7] And of men is he who takes idle tales in exchange for guidance to lead men astray from the path of Allah, without knowledge, and to make fun of it. For such there will be humiliating punishment.

In the Words of the Promised Messiah

In short, the Holy Qur'an is full of verses that enjoin us to show our love for God in word and deed, and to love Him more than anything else. As far as the second part of the question, pertaining to God's love for mankind, let it be clear that the Holy Qur'an contains many verses in which God says that He loves those who repent,¹ do good deeds and exercise patience. But nowhere does the Holy Qur'an say that God also loves those who love infidelity, sin and injustice; rather in their case it uses the word *Ihsan* (compassion, kindness, benevolence). For instance, it says:

“We have sent thee out of compassion for the entire world.” (21:108)

Since the world includes disbelievers, sinners and evil doers, God has opened the door of His mercy for them too and they can also attain salvation by following the guidance contained in the Holy Qur'an. I also declare that, according to the Holy Qur'an, God's love for mankind is not such that He should be required to crucify His



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

son and cause him to become accursed in order to redeem the sins of the evildoers. Curse upon the son of God will obviously entail a curse upon God Himself, God forbid, for (according to the Christians), the Father and the Son are inseparable. Godhead and curse cannot go together. Another point to consider is, by what love did God kill the virtuous and save the wicked? Surely no righteous person would be guilty of such conduct.

The third part of the question is: where in the Holy Qur'an is it written that man should love his fellow beings? The answer is that instead of using the word 'love', the Holy Qur'an uses two different terms, i.e., mercy and compassion. The word love has been used specifically for God because love culminates in worship.² But in the case of mankind the Holy Qur'an uses the words 'mercy' and 'kindness' instead of 'love', for love results in worship, while compassion results in sympathy. It is because of their failure to understand this difference that people of other faiths have conferred upon God's creatures what was in fact due to God. I do not believe that Jesus could ever have taught such idolatry. I would rather believe that such abhorrent teachings were added to the Gospels at a later stage and Jesus unjustly blamed for them. In short, the Holy Qur'an uses the word 'compassion' in relation to mankind, as he says, *Tawasow bil haqqay*

(103:4) and *wa tawasow bil marhamah* (90:18) i.e., believers are those who exhort one another to truth and compassion. Elsewhere, He says

“God enjoins you to show justice to all people, and if you wish to go further then be kind to them, and better still, show such compassion towards your fellow beings as you would do towards your own kindred.” (16:91)

Just consider whether there could be a better teaching than one that does not stop at enjoining compassion for mankind, but goes further and teaches *eeta ay dhil qurba* (being kind to others just as one is kind to one's kindred) which results from a natural desire (to do good). Often, one who shows kindness expects something in return and at times shows resentment towards those who fail to acknowledge it. Occasionally, swayed by one's emotions, one might even remind others of what one has done for them. But the doing of good through a natural inclination, which the Holy Qur'an compares to doing good to one's kindred, is indeed the highest and final stage of virtue. It is like a mother's kindness for her child, which is her natural instinct. Obviously she does not expect any gratitude from a mere infant.

Endnotes

1. Divine love is not like human love, which involves pain and agony of separation. Rather, it means that God treats those who do good deeds in the same way as a lover treats his beloved.

2. Whenever the word 'love' has been used in connection with human relationships, it does not imply true love. According to Islamic teaching, true love is only for God. Every other love is unreal and is only called love in the figurative sense.

From “Four Questions by a Christian and their Answers”. To read the full text of the book, go to Alislam.org

Editorial

Islam has been attacked by many over the last few centuries. Several prejudiced, so-called “scholars” have sarcastically and offensively selected some verses of the Holy Qur’an and expounded their own thoughts.

New opportunities have been offered to some of these “scholars” since the September 11 attacks. The West wants to know about Islam and what it represents. In this environment anyone who can Google the words Islam, Jihad, Muhammad and Qur’an pretends to be a “scholar” and an “expert” on Islam. As Westerners often lack true knowledge of Islam, they accept whatever is written by these Google scholars.

The issues raised in many of these Islamophobic books are the same which have been repeatedly stated over the centuries by the opponents of Islam. One such book is “Secrets of the Koran” by Don

Richardson, a Christian preacher. There is nothing particular or special about this book. It displays the same old thoughts of hatred, personal frustrations with a misunderstood religion and conveys to the West the “expertise” and “unique findings” in one’s “research”.

We have selected this book merely as a model and example to go over all the issues that have been brought up and to respond to them in the current issue. There is a book review on Secrets of the Koran in our Winter 2009 issue that our readers can refer to on our website Muslimsunrise.com.

Our main goal is to present to Americans the issues raised in this book because they cover nearly all the issues that so-called scholars publicize in their books.

The Western public really only has one choice and that is to read about the faith of Islam on their own from Muslim

sources and not the Google scholars of this age who have their own agendas. In fact, Mr. Richardson in his book has ruled that not just Islam but Hinduism and Buddhism are also incompatible with Western thought. Christianity is the only path. That verdict renders the Jewish faith irrelevant as well. It is amazing to note that the religious tolerance that the Western people present to the world is nowhere to be found in Mr. Richardson’s books or any other books like his.

We hope that readers would gain positive knowledge from this issue on the subjects that they have been bombarded with about Islam. We welcome any questions, remarks and exchange of ideas from readers of all faiths.

We are especially thankful to one of our staff writers, Ms. Lubna Roohi Malik, who diligently worked on this issue and coordinated with all the other writers.

Attacks on **Islam**, the Holy **Prophet^{saw}**, and the Holy **Qur'an**

We invite our adversaries to look at the teachings and contents of the Holy Qur'an attentively and discern its excellences with respect to its spiritual, moral and social guidance of mankind.

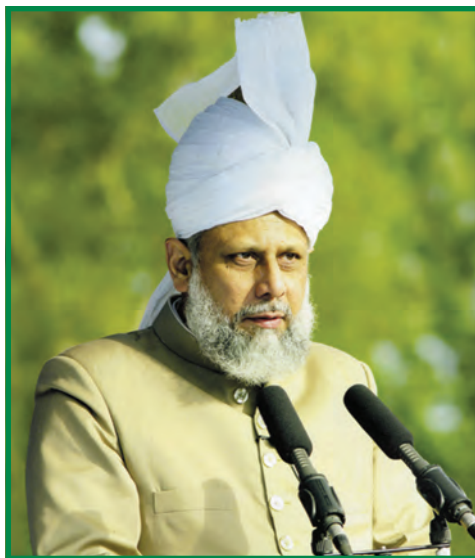
Summary of Friday Sermon delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{at}, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, February 29, 2008.

NOTE: Alislam Team takes full responsibility for any errors or miscommunication in this Synopsis of the Friday Sermon

After the recitation of Surah Fatihah, Hadhrat Khalifatul-Masih, may Allah be his support, proceeded. There has been a renewed intensity in attacks on Islam, on the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and on the Holy Qur'an with an objective of defaming Islam.

The reason behind these attacks is that Islam fulfills the needs of the time, and people are turning towards Islam after examining the teachings of the Qur'an. Unbiased people have pondered over the Holy Qur'an. Though just the translation does not provide the deep knowledge of the message of the Holy Qur'an, yet the ones who have a clear conscience gain some understanding.

A news item has appeared that a British journalist went to Afghanistan for social



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{at}

work. She was arrested by the Taliban and released on the promise that she will read the Holy Qur'an. After arriving home, on reading the Holy Qur'an, she found that there was great difference between the teachings of Islam and the treatment of women in Afghanistan. She accepted Islam.

The matter received a lot of media attention. Due to her education and experience, she was hired in Qatar. She stuck to principles of truth and fairness leading to differences with the owners resulting in her separation. She took the case to court and won arguing equal rights in Islam for women.

She had similar experience in a second employment. She again took the case to court and won arguing that it is the responsibility of Muslim governments to safeguard women's rights. These incidents strengthened her faith. Though her experiences were negative, her faith advanced through reading the Holy Qur'an. Rather than maligning Islamic teachings, she carried out a jihad against those who



were not following these teachings.

Such examples worry anti-Islam forces. Irrespective of the level of their affiliation with their own faith, anti-Islamic feelings force them to indulge in unbecoming practices. This is nothing new. Prophets have experienced this before and Islam now is a target as it is a great religion. Meccans stood up against Islam as it started gaining strength. 'Umar, a staunch enemy of Islam, bowed his head before the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, after reading a few verses of the Holy Qur'an. Allah elevated his status so that he became the second righteous Khalifah. After the migration of the Prophet to Medina, Jews became apprehensive of the increasing influence of Islam. Further expansion worried the kingdoms of Iran and Rome.

Today all the great powers are fearful of Islam. They have resorted to such un-

fair strategies against Islam that their own conscientious citizens have started raising their voices against their unfair practices. Adversarial voices rising out of the West do not represent the sentiment of the general public. Public has stood up in protest against unfair and vicious attacks.

A news lady, during an interview with our missionary, condemned the republication of the Danish cartoons, and declared that before their publication she was proud of her country. Generally people on internet and in the media have reacted strongly against the republication of Danish cartoons.

Khalifatul-Masih presented numerous quotes in this respect and said that this wave against Islam is not the work of a few writers, elected officials, politicians or cartoonists but there is a hand of great powers behind these incidents who are afraid of Islamic teachings and do not want their people to know Islamic teachings, and want to establish their supremacy in the name of religion. There was a big hand of Christians in closing down our television broadcast channel in the middle east [which was immediately replaced by an alternate resource]. They are trying to become the god of the world, and these brains are the ones who are involved in anti-Islamic efforts.

Islam's destiny now is to spread, not through terrorism or militism but through the Messiah of the age. All of us should make an effort to spread the peaceful message of Islam. Allah's plans cannot be frustrated by worldly powers.

Khalifatul-Masih gave details of the efforts of the Ahmadiyya community in Den-



mark with respect to the republication of the Danish cartoons, and presented the affirmative views of the queen and parliament towards Muslims.

Continuing with a review of the attacks on Islam, Khalifatul-Masih further quoted from a book written against the sanctity of the Holy Qur'an and refuted various allegations in the book.

He further pointed out with reference to the Holy Quran and its explanation by the Promised Messiah, peace be on him, that people who live immoral and unhealthy lives cannot understand and benefit from the pristine teachings of the Qur'an. Despite it having deep meanings, it is easily comprehensible. Only special

people reach the depth of its meaning though everyone is able to understand and practice its teachings. People who are filled with envy, animosity and viciousness cannot realize its beneficence, except for when they analyze it with unbiased minds. Therefore, when we hear the antagonistic views, they increase our faith as they fulfill what the Holy Qur'an told us centuries ago.

The Holy Qur'an tells us that the people who have taken up to malign the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and the Holy Qur'an will not escape the consequences, and we have seen the fulfillment of this warning throughout history. The consequences are imminent if the behavior is not changed. No false god will be able to save them when the time of

consequence arrives.

We invite our adversaries to look at the teachings and contents of the Holy Qur'an attentively and discern its excellences with respect to its spiritual, moral and social guidance of mankind. Teachings of Islam are in accordance with nature but it is necessary to have a pious heart to understand them, and a purifier to guide. In this age, the Ahmadiyya community portrays the beauties of its teachings.

There is a great need for prayers these days that Muslims observe heavenly signs and abandon their misunderstandings and unite for a nobler purpose saving themselves from a grave mischief.

In his book, *Secrets of the Koran*, Don Richardson prefers to view *purdah* as a tool for female subjugation. Under his microscope, *purdah* acts as an impediment to the progress of Muslim women and stifles their presence in society. It is true, that in some predominantly Muslim countries, women are forced to cover themselves. There are, however, women who, living freely in the West, choose to wear the *hijab*, or head-covering, or even the *burqa*, or a long robe or coat acting as an outer garment.



A Judeo-Christian Cultural Preference: The Purdah

By MAHAM KHAN

The only reference to a head-covering in the New Testament is attributed to Paul, in 1 Corinthians. Among non-Muslims, his words are a subject of much dispute: ‘Every man that prays or prophesies having something on his head, shames his head; but every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, shames her head, for it is one and the same as if she were a woman with a shaved head. For if a woman does not cover herself, let her also be shorn; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered...’, (1 Corinthians 11: 4- 6). Continuing in verses 11: 14-15, Paul mentions the hair serving as the head-covering for women. That, however, implies that men should be bald to pray. Thus, it seems that Paul is contradicting himself here.

The custom of women covering themselves was much more apparent among early Jews and Christians. We can deduce through history that the religious clergy promoted a woman’s modesty through covering her hair and wearing loose garments. Somehow, this custom was slowly abandoned. The practice of covering among the early Jews had its basis in the prophetic precept of Micah 6:8, “...and to be modest in walking with your God”, as mentioned in the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud).¹ And so, while women were required to cover themselves in decent clothing, even men were instructed to dress modestly. Haredi as well as modern Orthodox Jewish men still wear their traditional kippa, while the women have also found many ways to cover their hair today, just as Muslim women wear different forms of the *hijab*.

Further, the Jews revere Sarah and Rebekah, the wives of Abraham and Isaac, respectively. Two references² to the head-covering found in the Old Testament show that these women covered their heads. Jewish women strove to follow their footsteps, dressing in a way that helped them submit to God. Thus, in observing such modesty, women shun their pride and humble themselves and realize their potential to focus on their spirituality. For example, when Abraham’s servant was escorting Rebekah to the land of Negeb, where she was going to become Isaac’s wife, Rebekah displayed her inner *and* outer modesty: ‘And Isaac was out walking in order to meditate in the field....When he raised his eyes and looked...there, camels were coming! When Rebekah raised her eyes, she caught sight

of Isaac and she swung herself down from off the camel. Then she said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” and the servant said, “It is my master.” And she [Rebekah] proceeded to take a head-cloth and to cover herself. (Genesis 24: 63-65). From this passage, it is clear that not only did Rebekah cover her head when she learned of the identity of the stranger as her future husband, but even before she knew the identity of the man, Rebekah dismounted the camel to avoid being in plain vision. Her attitude was such that she did not want to attract the attention of a stranger. Rebekah is a biblical figure, yet it seems she is the embodiment of all values Islamic.

Sarah’s example confirms the Islamic injunction for good Muslim women to cover themselves. Sarah was given a covering by the king Abimelech so that she would be distinguished among the people and no one would bother her. It is said in Genesis 20:16, “Here it is a covering of the eyes to all who are with you, and before everybody, and you are cleared of reproach”. This is resonant of why Muslim women are commanded to cover themselves in the Holy Qur’an: “O Prophet, tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers that they should let down over them their loose outer garments. It is more likely that they will thus be distinguished and not molested,” (33:60).

Mr. Richardson wants to blame the “obsession” of Muslims wanting their women to be covered on “Muhammad, the Koran and Islam”. Yet, in addition to the history of Judaism and Christianity, even European medieval and Renaissance art is full of portrayals of women in head-coverings and flowing robes. Mary, the mother of Jesus, has always been painted and sculpted in loose dresses that envelope her whole body³. Further, she has always been painted in dark colored garments, very similar to the shades of the Islamic *purdah*. Similarly, the Latin Rite for the Catholic Church made it obligatory for nuns to wear something very similar to the Islamic dress in 1917. Even though the law has been revised, some churches consider the dress code an “immemorial custom”.⁴

Many argue that the command to cover, both in the Old and in the New Testament, is for married women only. Proponents of such a belief say that the head-dress symbolizes a woman’s marital status, and submission to her husband. But in 1 Thessalonians, we

read, “Always be rejoicing, pray incessantly...” (5:16- 17). Nobody is excluded from worship here; the young and the elderly are required to pray continuously, as well as the married and the unmarried.

Mainstream Christians, however, have done away with the practice of covering, insisting that women no longer need to cover. Today’s woman does not want to uphold the ideals of modest women like Mary or Rebekah; instead, she revels in being able to stand next to a man, exposing herself, and knowing that men like what they see. Of course men will like what they see because the “...eyes of a man aren’t satisfied”, (Proverbs 27:20), yet what they think about such a wanton woman is ‘disrespectful’.

Hence Islam enjoins *purdah* for believing women. Yes, like it is repeatedly said, *purdah* is for the protection of the women themselves. But what does that really mean? That men will not touch them? It means that the woman behind the veil can feel safe that the man in front of her has no lustful inclinations towards her, and is behaving exactly as he ought to—a man of honor who lowers his gaze and respects a woman as commanded by the Holy Qur’an: “Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes...That is purer for them. Surely Allah is well aware of what they do”.⁵

The covering is not meant to intimidate anyone, but to instill remembrance of Allah, The All-Seeing, in every man and woman’s heart.

As much as Mr. Richardson would like to believe that *purdah* is an “Islamic cultural preference”, he cannot deny that women observed *purdah* long before Prophet Muhammad. *Purdah* is, without doubt, a part of the Judeo-Christian heritage. Islam has only preserved it. ♦

Maham Khan is a staff editor for Muslim Sunrise. She resides in Holt, Michigan, with her family.

(Endnotes)

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/tzniut#Hair_covering
2. New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT), Genesis 20:16; 24:63-64.
3. Paintings: 1. Nicolas Fromant, Moses and the burning Bush, 1476; statue of the virgin mary, in Mountain Province, the Phillipines; Fra Angelico, The Annunciation.
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_headcovering
5. The Holy Qur’an, Chapter 24, verse 31; Islam International Publications, Ltd.

Concubines

AND THE HOLY QUR'AN

By Khaula Rehman, MD

Concubinage existed long before the advent of Islam. The practice was widespread in the Roman and Persian empires and the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, “Concubinage is the state of cohabitation of a man and a woman without the full sanctions of legal marriage. ... In Roman law concubinage was the permanent cohabitation of a man and a woman outside of their existing formal marriages. The partners in such relationships and the offspring of their union did not have the same legal rights accorded married persons and their legitimate children.”¹

In the Roman Empire the title of concubine was not derogatory and was often inscribed on tombstones. This was different from the current Western laws that do not acknowledge any legal status of concubines. Today, the law only admits monogamous marriages. Any other relationship does not enjoy legal protection. This historical perspective led Westerners to misunderstand Islam. The term concubinage is a Judeo-Christian term. The Qur’anic term is ‘what your right hands possess.’ This term has been used in the Qur’an in reference to slaves or bond women, and points out that because these women are under the care of Muslims, they should not be mistreated.² As is known, in Islam the right hand has special merit and privileged functions.

There is no truth to the claim that conjugal relationships are allowed in Islam if outside the bond of marriage.³ The Holy Qur’an has explained that the object of marriage is to protect one from moral and physical diseases; thus, Muslims are not allowed to gratify their passions outside the domain of marriage.

Chapter Nisa details the blood relationships that forbid marriage: “Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your fathers’ sisters ...”⁴ The very next verse describes the issue under discussion, “And forbidden to you are married women, except such as your right hands possess.”⁵

By relating these two verses one can immediately understand the Islamic teachings on the issue of concubines (your right hands possess). Although concubines did lose certain rights when prisoners of war, the Qur’an in this verse is only referring to them within the context of marriage. The very next verse confirms the above inference that, unlike in Roman or Judeo-Christian tradition, there is no Islamic permission for conjugal relationships in Islam outside of marriage,

“And whoso of you cannot afford to marry free, believing women, let him marry what your right hands possess, namely, your believing handmaids...so marry them with the leave of their masters and give them their dowries according to what is fair, they being chaste, not committing fornication, nor taking secret paramours.”⁶

The prior marriages of the concubines or the prisoners of war, who could not negotiate freedom, were annulled, but no conjugal relationship was allowed in the Muslim society without marrying them under all of the terms and conditions that any other woman would be wed. So profound was the effect of the teaching of chastity in Islam that some of the companions wanted the Holy Prophet to give them permission to practice celibacy. But the Holy Prophet refused that because he wanted Muslims to follow the golden mean. Accusations that the Holy Prophet and his companions indulged in self gratification with the concubines is totally alien to the teachings and spirit of Islam. Only those ignorant of the teachings of Islam or with evil motives can make such claims.

In the time of the Holy Prophet, hostile nations waged religious wars against Islam to attempt to destroy it and compel Muslims to abandon their religion, enslaving Muslim men and women and treating them in a horrific and inhumane manner. Muslim women, especially pious ones, were captured and treated as bondwomen and concubines.

Thus, the Islamic injunction to take prisoners of war was only a retaliatory measure that was necessary to deter the enemy from their excesses. However, because women participated in wars, and in some cases actual fighting, there was no reason for them to be exempt from imprisonment. After all, if it is law-

The Holy Prophet was very explicit that female slaves and prisoners of war should be given a good education and upbringing. He is reported to have said, "He who has a slave girl and gives her proper education and brings her up in a becoming manner and then frees her and marry her, for him is double reward."¹³

ful for every nation and country to imprison women for criminal offenses, then why ought warrior women not be taken captive in the battlefield?

In the seventh century there were no state prisons; thus, prisoners were distributed among Muslims to live in their homes. The Muslims were responsible for providing shelter, food and clothing for the prisoners, and the Holy Prophet's teaching was to take good care of prisoners and to treat them humanely, such that every opportunity was given for them to earn their freedom. The Holy Prophet safeguarded these rights. If any Muslim committed a sin, he had to free a slave as a punishment. If any Muslim mistreated a slave, they were forced to free him/her.

Further, from its founding, Islam worked on the gradual and complete abolition of slavery. The Qur'an laid down the following principals for the abolition of slavery:

1. Prisoners can only be taken during a regular battle.⁷
2. Prisoners cannot be retained after the war is over.⁸
3. Prisoners are to be set free either as a mark of favor, or by exchange of prisoners, or by paying ransom.⁹
4. To obtain freedom, prisoners of war could enter into a civil written contract with his or her master, irrespective of whether the master liked it or not, which is known as 'mukatabat' (deed of manumission). After this con-

tract, the slave was free to earn the ransom in any legitimate means he or she liked to attain his or her freedom.¹⁰

Only those females who were somehow not able to attain freedom by the above means or who chose to stay with the Muslims were to be married. It is this marriage that is stressed in the Holy Qur'an. By marriage, the female captives and their children secured their freedom, and eliminated the chance of prostitution or concubinage.¹¹ This provided them hope and dignity and made men responsible for taking care of them.¹²

The Holy Prophet was very explicit that female slaves and prisoners of war should be given a good education and upbringing. He is reported to have said, "He who has a slave girl and gives her proper education and brings her up in a becoming manner and then frees her and marry her, for him is double reward."¹³ This indicates that if a Muslim wants to marry a slave girl, he should first free her and then marry her.

The Holy Prophet's own practice was in harmony with this admonition. Two of the Holy Prophet's wives, Jawariya and Saffiya, came to him as prisoners of war. He freed and then married them according to the Islamic Law. Another wife, Maria, was sent to him by the King of Egypt as an offering; after granting her freedom and marriage, Maria was even known as "mother of the faithful."

The teachings of slavery and marriage of prisoners and slaves are no longer applicable in this day and age.¹⁴

Hadhrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad explains this in his book *Islam and Slavery*:

"If we carefully consider this matter, we shall find that this very circumstance is an evidence of the Law of Islam being a perfect and a universal one, for it shows that in the Islamic law, the change of circumstances has been fully taken into consideration. This is why that while some laws which form the basis of the Islamic code have been laid down in a rigid form which admits of no alteration, there are other commandments which have either been given in alternative forms in the view of changing conditions....."^{15 16}

He concludes his argument by referring to a verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"Allah it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it there are verses that are decisive in meaning — they are the basis of the Book — and there are others that are susceptible of different interpretations. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue such thereof as are susceptible of different interpretations, seeking discord and seeking wrong interpretation of it. And none knows its right interpretation except Allah"^{17♦}

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Endnotes

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² Al Qur'an 4:37.

³ Al Qur'an 24:33.

⁴ Al Qur'an 4:24.

⁵ Al Qur'an 4:25.

⁶ Al Qur'an 4:26.

⁷ Al Qur'an 47:5.

⁸ Al Qur'an 47:5.

⁹ Al Qur'an 47:5.

¹⁰ Al Qur'an 24:34.

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¹² Al Qur'an 4:4.

¹³ Bukhari, kitab ul Ilm.

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r9M-NykXMc>

¹⁵ Hadhrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad, *Islam and Slavery*. Qadian, 1975. Pages 71-72.

¹⁶ <http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Islam%20and%20Slavery-20080616MN.pdf>

¹⁷ Al Qur'an 3:8.

Physical Ascension: Myth or Fact?

by Dania S. Ahmed

Sent by God to strengthen the same message delivered to prophets before the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, the Holy Qu'ran is a beacon of light applicable to every time and race. Accordingly, Islam is not a new religion. Its adherents follow the revival of the message sent to many prophets including Adam^{AS}, Abraham^{AS}, Moses^{AS}, and Jesus^{AS}. Islam is the final part of a continuum of revelations and is a testament to an All-Powerful and Living God. In Islam, Jesus is also viewed as a prophet. Contrary to the Christian doctrine, Ahmadi Muslims believe that Prophet Jesus^{AS} did not physically ascend into heaven, but died a natural death. Evidence in the Qu'ran confirms that there was no physical ascension:

The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger; surely, Messengers like unto him had indeed passed away before him. (Al Mai'dah 5:76)



Furthermore, ample support in the Old and New Testament attest to this fact. In fact, literal ascension from earth to heaven seems to be a concept that is merely assumed and scholars have many a time challenged the literality and logic of this event and theological view.

In *Secrets of the Koran*, Mr. Don Richardson criticizes the Holy Prophet^{SAW} for purposely omitting the story of the Passover Lamb in all 27 tellings of the Moses and Pharaoh epic in the Holy Qu'ran. He further states that the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was determined to deny that Jesus died as the atoning "*Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29), thereby "deliberately avoiding an Old Testament foreshadowing of Christ as an atoner."¹ Mr. Richardson's attempts to convey that Islam devalues the status of Prophet Jesus^{AS} by neglecting to regard him as one who takes away all sins of mankind is ineffective because Prophet Jesus^{AS} is one of God's beloved prophets and God would not subject him to an accursed death and although Prophet Jesus^{AS} is given a respectable status in Islam, his status does not exceed that of *Khâtîm an-Nabiyîn* (Seal of the prophets), which is given only to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}.

Citing 5:11 Qu'ran, Mr. Richardson argues that if the Holy Qu'ran describes Prophet Jesus^{AS} as fashioning a new cre-

ation out of clay, breathing into a new spirit and healing the leprous, why does the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} not recognize Jesus as a redemption figure for mankind? The answer is simple: Prophet Jesus^{AS}, like all preceding prophets, died a natural death. Indeed, Prophet Jesus^{AS}, being a righteous prophet of God, could not die a cruel, unjust and accursed death.

The Promised Messiah^{AS}, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, writes:

"The man who was most perfect...and who through a spiritual revival and resurrection manifested the first judgment in the world and revived the dead world...was Muhammad, the chosen one, peace be on him."²

If such a great prophet who came to perfect God's message too died a natural death, how could Prophet Jesus^{AS} be resurrected and wipe away all sins of mankind through physical ascension? God, through His infinite mercy, appoints prophets whenever mankind is in need of guidance. As such, he appointed the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} who lived his life with kindness and compassion. Similarly, Prophet Jesus^{AS} was sent to convey the message of God. These prophets, in accordance to the laws of nature, died a natural death. The Holy Qu'ran reveals: And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Verily, all Messengers have passed

away before him. (Al-Imran 3:145)

Confirming the death of Prophet Jesus^{AS}, God says: O Jesus, I will cause thee to die a natural death... (Al-Imran 2:56).

In the same vein, the Holy Qu'ran says: "We granted not everlasting life to any human being before thee. If then thou shouldst die, shall they live here for ever?" (Al-Anbiya 21:35)

Analysis of the aforementioned verse profoundly explains that "no human being is immune from death, not even the Holy Prophet. Eternity and everlastingness are God's own exclusive attributes."

If intentional omission of the Passover story from the Holy Qu'ran is desecration, as Mr. Richardson remarks, can the same not be said about the Old and New Testament of what is the focal point

Omission of physical ascension is replaced by a mystery in Mark – Prophet Jesus^{AS} empty tomb. In Matthew, there is also no account of the resurrection; it ends with the journey of Prophet Jesus^{AS} eleven disciples to Mount Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20). Concerning these accounts, the Promised Messiah^{AS}, in *Jesus in India*, asks: From the mere fact of Jesus not being in the tomb, can anybody in reason believe that he had gone up to heaven? May there not be other causes?⁴

Mark and Matthew pave the way for much ambiguity whereupon questions are raised.

The Holy Qu'ran, like the Old Testament, clearly counters the idea of physical ascension: And their saying, 'We did kill the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah; whereas they slew

him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified; and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it; they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture. (Al-Nisa 4:158)

The word that is

used for exaltation, *rafaa*, refers to spiritual (not physical) exaltation.⁵ Thus, Prophet Jesus^{AS} could not have physically ascended because placing him on the cross was accursed: And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree.⁶

Devastating the plan of the Jews to make Prophet Jesus^{AS} seem accursed through crucifixion, God saved him: O Jesus! I will clear thee from the charges of those who disbelieve, and will place those who follow thee above those who disbelieve, until the Day of Resurrection; then to Me shall be your return. (Al-Imran 3:56)

Why would God condemn a beloved prophet of His to suffer on the cross? The Promised Messiah^{AS} explains: The innocence of Jesus has no doubt become established in the sight of thoughtful persons by the evidence of our Holy Prophet, for he, as well as the Holy Qur'an, have testified that the charges brought against

Jesus (on whom be peace) are all unfounded.⁷

Thus, the Holy Qu'ran elevates Prophet Jesus' status. Careful exegesis of the New Testament illuminates how heavily metaphorical the gospels are. Mr. Richardson explains his own example in the section entitled, *The Words of Jesus*, in which a verse from Luke is quoted where Prophet Jesus^{AS} says he has come to "bring fire on the earth,"⁸ as: He [Jesus] was not proclaiming Himself an arsonist! Bringing spiritual fire to Earth for light, warmth and testing of spiritual qualities is not the same as setting this planet physically aflame.⁹

Likewise, Prophet Jesus^{AS} ascension was spiritual: It is contrary to God's law for a human being to ascend to heaven in his physical body.¹⁰ Physical ascension is merely a statement of belief and not a 'physical observable event.'¹¹

Did Prophet Jesus^{AS} meet the criteria of being accursed as to become estranged from God, deprived of divine mercy and of divine love, devoid absolutely of His Knowledge?¹² Nay, if Christianity accepts the Old Testament¹³ why does it fail to recognize the omission of physical ascension? ♦

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² Ruhani Khazain (London, 1984), Vol. 8, p. 36

³ Pickett, Raymond. "Following Jesus in Galilee: resurrection as empowerment in the Gospel of Mark." *Currents in Theology and Mission*, Dec 2007. 1.

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⁶ Deuteronomy 21:22-23⁷ Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam. *Jesus in India*, Islam International Publications: England, 2003. 61.

⁸ Richardson, Don, *Secrets of the Koran*. Regal Books: California, 2003

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Khan, Muhammad Zafrulla. *Deliverance from the Cross*. Alden Press: England, 1978. 68.

¹¹ Ibid.

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Confirming the death of Prophet Jesus^{AS}, God says: O Jesus, I will cause thee to die a natural death... (Al-Imran 2:56).

of Christianity – the ascension of Prophet Jesus^{AS}? Albeit there are references to an eternal liberating king in the line of King David in Psalms 132:11 and 89:3, but these references are only symbolic. There is no mention of Prophet Jesus^{AS} physical ascension in the Old Testament. Likewise, the New Testament is regarded as the most original and authentic Christian source yet there is no mention of physical ascension in Mark or Matthew. In Mark, this is especially surprising since the entire gospel chronicles the death of Prophet Jesus^{AS} in detail. Additionally, other gospels in the New Testament mention it so why the discrepancy? Raymond Pickett, a New Testament scholar and teacher, writes: Given the consistent and ubiquitous emphasis on appearances of the risen Jesus in the Gospel tradition, it seems apparent that Mark's conspicuous omission is by design and indeed makes a bold statement.³

Islam and Obedience to the Rule of Law

“Pay back, therefore, Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God. These few words are profoundly rich with wisdom.... Religion and statecraft are two of the many wheels of the wagon of society. It is, in reality, irrelevant whether there are two, four and eight wheels as long as they keep their orientation correct and revolve within their orbits. There can be no question of mutual conflict or confrontation.”¹

By Shazia and Sikander Sohail

In worldly matters, Islam enjoins obedience to “those who are in authority among you” (4:60) and forbids anarchy of any kind, even that exercised in the name of reform, as is admonished, “And when it is said to them, ‘Create not disorder in the earth,’ they say ‘We are only promoters of peace’. Beware! It is surely they who create disorder, but they do not perceive it” (2:12-13)” Prophet Muhammad^{saw} advised, “You are obligated to hear and to obey in prosperity and in adversity, willingly or unwillingly, and even when you are treated unjustly”.²

Following the law, and seeking recourse through appropriate means, is not to be abandoned as long as there is freedom of religion in the land. Prophet Muhammad^{saw} is reported to have said that, “Your worst rulers will be those whom you hate and who hate you.” When the companions asked him if they should boycott them he said, “Not so long as they maintain the prayer services; not so long as they maintain the prayer services.”³ Thus, Muslim subjects can never be a threat to any system of governance that does not interfere with their right to pray.

Richardson’s allegation that Prophet Muhammad had the goal of ‘total Islamic supremacy’ is belied by the content of the Constitution of Medina which “is a clear indication of the lines on which the Apostle was building the *ummah*. It was a multi-religious community.”⁴ “It is interesting to note that this first constitution of the Arabian Prophet dealt almost exclusively with the civil and

political relations of the citizens among themselves and with the outside.”⁵

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra} stated

“The Holy Qur’an says: “There is no compulsion in religion (2:257).” [...] It says there is NO coercion in faith or in matters of faith[.....] So, here is the question: if one religion imposes its law on a society where people of other religions and denominations

ing the law of the country; the more so since the general principle accepted by the modern political thinkers is that religion should not be permitted to interfere with politics and politics should not be permitted to interfere with religion.”⁶

The Question of Divided Loyalties

Don Richardson raises the question of divided loyalties of Muslims living in Western countries, especially the U.S.. He asserts that this question has been resolved for Christians by Jesus but Muslims cannot be obedient to a constitution that is not based on *Shariah*, and will pose a dilemma for those Muslims who might be asked to fight for their adopted countries. Since the U.S. Constitution is not opposed to *shariah*,

there is no room for confusion or conflict in the minds of intelligent Muslims. Fortunately for the Ahmadiyya Community this matter has been expounded on with such clarity that they are free from the danger of being influenced by the hate-filled rhetoric of the militant factions.

The Promised Messiah^{as}, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, laid down very clearly:

“Believers are to obey those in authority, besides God and His Prophet. To say that ‘those in authority’ does not include a non-Muslim-Government would be a manifest error. For, a government-or authority-whose ordinances are in accordance with the *Shariah*



also live, how will this verse stand against your attempt to coerce. Not only vis-à-vis the people from other religions, but vis-à-vis the people from the same religion who are not willing. The only authority in Islam, which was genuinely capable of being given the right to coerce, was the Founder of Islam, Prophet Muhammad^{saw}...because he was a living model of Islam.... Yet, addressing him, Allah says in the Qur’an: “Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an admonisher; Thou hast no authority to compel them (88:22-23).” You are just an admonisher. No more. You are given NO authority to coerce. Most of Islam and most of Christianity and most of Hinduism can be practiced without their be-

(that is, they are not in conflict with it) is ‘*authority from among you.*’ Those who are not against us are among us. The Qur’an, therefore, is unequivocal on the point. Obedience to governmental authority is one of its imperatives.” (Works and Speeches, Vol. (i), p. 261)

So also in the *Hadith*, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} says:

“He who obeys me, obeys God; he who disobeys me disobeys God. He who obeys his authority obeys me; he who disobeys his authority disobeys me” (Muslim, Kitab al Ijarah).

“In this *hadith* the whole subject of obedience becomes illuminated... Loyalty and obedience belong by right only to God, Creator, Master, Lord of Men and Nations. Others have authority derived from Him...[O]ne who has authority among men is responsible for discipline, for order among God’s creatures; a guardian of their lives, property and honor. Obedience to such a one is most pleasing to God. It is obedience to God.”⁷

The Ahmadiyya Muslim stance on whether a Muslim would fight for America is unequivocal:

“One imaginary situation is often posed. Two countries, both with Ahmadi populations, go to war, Ahmadis in the two countries profess loyalty to their respective Governments. What are Ahmadis going to do in such a contingency? Our answer has always been this: Yes, even in such a contingency, Ahmadis will remain loyal to their respective Governments. This belief...is...taught by God and explained by His Prophet... If loyalty to their respective Governments results in the killing of Ahmadis by Ahmadis, well that is there and, there is nothing more to be said or done. It is but a consequence, an obligation entailed by our religious belief. Principles have priority over persons. Persons may be sacrificed for the sake of principles, not principles for the sake of persons. Such mutual killing will be forgiven [and] ... will be the result of His Own teaching, of conditions, over which we have no control.”⁸

“To be brief, the Ahmadiyya stand is clear and clean. Need we reiterate that we Ahmadis living in different countries, under different states and Governments, are loyal to the countries in which we live, to the states and Government under which we live.... This is the divine command and the voice of our hearts. And he who does not believe us and attributes some other belief to us, offends against God and grievously wrongs us.”⁹

Islam in the Eyes of History

Islam has a long history of governing vast empires, comprising populations of diverse re-

ligions, cultures, races, and languages with the golden principle of freedom of religion and speech. Islam conquered lands to improve the condition of people by establishing the rule of law and freedom of religion, providing social services, investing in science and philosophy, and eradicating differences in class, gender, and race. Today, the moral and intellectual condition of Muslims is such that they need to look towards their own reformation rather than try to conquer countries that have already adopted the very principles taught by Islam.

Historically, the correct interpretation of Islamic theology led to a concept of human rights that the West arrived at almost a thousand years later. “In the field of human rights, early Islamic jurists introduced a number of advanced legal concepts which anticipated similar modern concepts in the field. These included the notions of the charitable trust and the trusteeship of property; the notion of brotherhood and social solidarity; the notions of human dignity and the dignity of labour; the notion of an ideal law; the condemnation of antisocial behavior; the presumption of innocence; the notion of “bidding unto good” (assistance to those in distress); and the notions of sharing, caring, universalism, fair industrial relations, fair contract, commercial integrity, freedom from usury, women’s rights, privacy, abuse of rights, juristic personality, individual freedom, equality before the law, legal representation, non-retroactivity, supremacy of the law, judicial independence, judicial impartiality, limited sovereignty, tolerance, and democratic participation...”¹⁰

The charge that Muslims do not feel obligated to obey laws that are not dictated by ‘*shariah*’ is erroneous since the laws that govern the temporal aspects of a Muslim’s life are secular in nature. “[T]he manner in which an act was qualified as morally good or bad in the spiritual domain of Islamic religion was quite different from the manner in which that same act was qualified as legally valid or invalid in the temporal domain of Islamic law. Islamic law was... focused on ensuring that an individual received justice, not that one be a good person.”¹¹

In terms of women’s rights, women generally had more legal rights under Islamic law than they did under Western legal systems until the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, “French married women, unlike their Muslim sisters, suffered from restrictions on their legal capacity which were removed only in 1965.” Noah Feldman, a Harvard University law professor, notes: “As for sexism, the common law long denied married women any property rights or

indeed legal personality apart from their husbands. When the British applied their law to Muslims in place of *Shariah*, as they did in some colonies, the result was to strip married women of the property that Islamic law had always granted them.”¹²

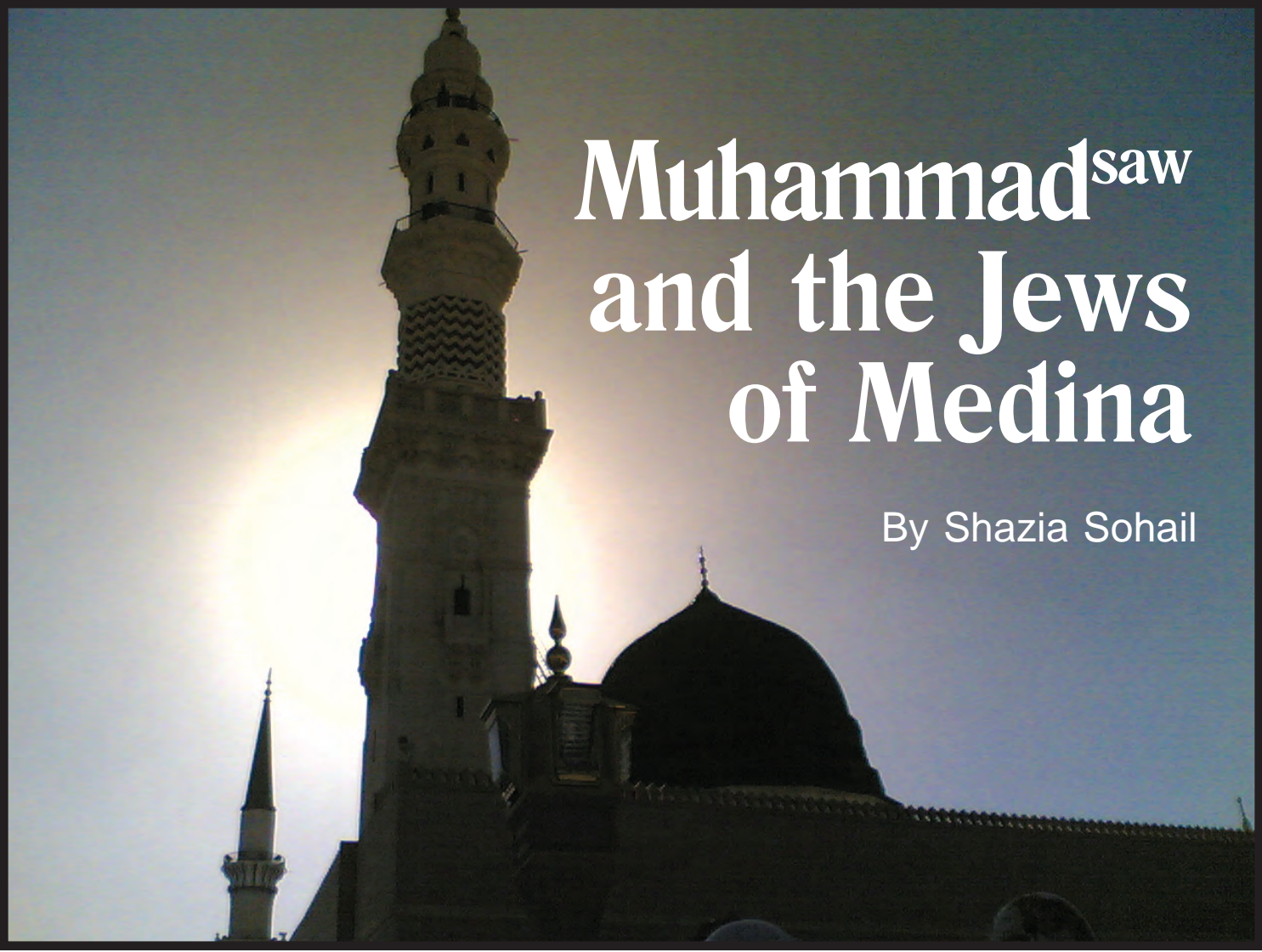
In today’s political and religious climate, it is understandable that concerns about the separation of church and state may arise. However, intellectual integrity dictates that answers to these concerns be thoroughly sought. Richardson’s allegations bear the marks of extreme haste in jumping to conclusions and blatant intellectual dishonesty. Without question, Islam does not posit that *Shariah* be a trump card to state government. ♦

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Muhammad^{saw} and the Jews of Medina

By Shazia Sohail

The earliest account about the fate of the Jews of Medina, other than the Qur'an, is obtained from the biography, *Sirat* of Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, by Ibn Ishaq, who was born in 704 AD in Medina. Although Ibn Ishaq's biography is quite thorough, Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship has, ignored many of his own views on what happened with the Jews due to the events which took place in his lifetime and influenced his views against the Jews."²

The widely-reported short version of the story of the Jews of Medina is that "at the advent of Islam there were three Jewish tribes that lived in Yathrib (later Medina), as well as other Jewish settlements further to the north. As soon as these tribes realized that Islam was being firmly established and gaining power, they adopted an actively hostile attitude, and the final result of the struggle was the disappearance of these Jewish communities from Arabia proper.

Ibn Ishaq, followed by later historians, relates that Banu Qaynuqa, and later Banu al-Nadir, provoked the Muslims, were besieged, and in turn surrendered and departed. The third of the Jewish tribes, Banu Qurayza, sided with the Qurashites, made an unsuccessful attack on Medina to destroy Islam, and failed. Unlike the Banu al-Nadir, they were subjected to the arbitration of Sa'd b. Mu'adh, a member of the Aws tribe, allies of Qurayza. *He* ruled that the grown-up males should be put to death

and the women and children subjected to slavery. Estimates of those killed vary from 400 to 900."³

We shall proceed to analyze the fate of the three tribes, on the basis of facts from the following sources:

1. The Qur'an.

2. Kitab Sirat Rasul Allah, Ibn Hisham's recension of the original work by Ibn Ishaq (d. 151AH/768 AD). These will be compared to Waqidi (d. 207/823) and Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845).

3. Sahih Bukhari (d. 256 AH/869 AD)

4. Al-Sahih of Muslim (d. 261 AH/874 AD).⁴

Banu Qaynuqa

There are far too many inconsistencies in the story of B. Qaynuqa as it has been passed down by historians, without investigation, for it to be believable:

(i) Two early Meccan *surahs*, *Bani Isra'il*⁵

and *Yunus*⁶ show that the Prophet always had an idea of the ultimate Jewish reaction to his claim.

(ii) The story of the Muslim woman immodestly exposed by the Banu Qaynuqa goldsmith is generally cited as the reason for escalation of hostilities between the Muslims and Banu Qaynuqa. This is not reported by Ibn Ishaq, but was added by his editor Ibn Hashim almost a hundred years later.⁷

(iii) Banu Qaynuqa were 700 strong, 300 with armor and well-provided strongholds, compared to 300 Muslims without armor.⁸

(iv) Banu Qaynuqa were the bravest of the Jews and called themselves the 'men of war,'⁹ which is why they took the initiative and 'went to war.'¹⁰

(v) After only a fifteen-day siege, the Banu Qaynuqa surrendered.

(vi) Ibn Ishaq's account of the whole affair is short and restrained. His bias against the Jews becomes obvious when he implies, without any authority, that if it had not been for Abd Allah bin Ubayy's plea on their behalf, the Prophet would have slain all of them. This event took place right after Badr when imposition of such a severe punishment was impossible by Muslims in their weak position.¹²

(vii) In response to Abd Allah bin Ubayy's plea, the Prophet said, "you can have them." Ibn Ishaq does not report Banu Qaynuqa were expelled from Medina. It was Waqidi who later added the phrase "and ordered them to be expelled from Medina."¹³

(viii) Neither Bukhari nor Muslim reported any Hadith on the Prophet's conflict with Banu Qaynuqa, though both dealt with the Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayza. The expulsion of the Banu Qaynuqa has been reported by both of them together with the general expulsion of Jews from Medina which did not take place during the Prophet's life.¹⁴

(ix) Abu Yusuf (113/731 – 182/798), who deals in his *Kitab-al-Kharaj* with the problems of land taxation and the legal positions of non-Muslims makes no reference to the expulsion of B. Qaynuqa and the distribution of their property.¹⁵

(x) Yhya Bin Adam (140/757 – 203/818) reports that Banu al-Nadir were the first to be deported from Yathrib.¹⁶

(xi) Imam Shafi (150/767 – 204/820) reports that the Prophet employed Jewish

auxiliaries of the Banu Qaynuqa against the Jews of Khayber (7/628)¹⁷

(xii) The Qur'an supports the view that Banu Qaynuqa were not expelled in the second year of Hijrah. *Surah al-Hashr*, which was revealed after the Battle of Uhud, in the fourth year of the Hijrah and deals with the banishment of the B. al-Nadir from Medina, refers to their expulsion as "the first exile."¹⁸

(xiii) While the Qur'an mentions the Banu al-Nadir's expulsion and Banu Qurayza's punishment, it does not refer to the Banu Qaynuqa's expulsion.¹⁹

(xiv) Since Abu Ishaq does not report their expulsion, he does not refer to the disposal of their property.²⁰

Banu al-Nadir

The story about the fate of the Banu Nadir is less controversial and relatively consistent:

(i) To stop the progress of Islam, the Jews employed the communication media against the Prophet. The propagandist poets, whom Rodinson describes as "the journalists of the time", and Carmichael as "kindlers of battle," accused the Muslims of Medina of dishonoring themselves by submitting to an outsider.²²

(ii) Ka'b b. Ashraf, who was elected chief of the Jews lamented the loss of the Quraysh at Badr (624), and set out for Mecca to rouse the Meccans to avenge the defeat at Badr. In one of his elegies he sang of the nobility of those who fell at Badr and cried out for vengeance. In a year's time the Meccans were ready to fight.²³

(iii) Banu Nadir conspired to kill the Prophet.^{24,25}

(iv) Approximately three months after the Badr, Sallam b. Mishkam, chief of B. al-Nadir, secretly entertained Abu Sufyan and two hundred Meccan riders with food and drink and supplied secret information about the Muslims.²⁶

(v) Within four months, Muslims lost more than a hundred men at Uhud and Bi'r Maunah. They needed peace at home and the Prophet approached the Banu Qurayza and Banu al-Nadir for renewal of the agreement; only the Banu Qurayza renewed.²⁷

(vi) The Banu al-Nadir adopted a hostile posture. For the Muslims to treat them with the same leniency shown to the Banu Qaynuqa would have been a sign of weak-

ness, and disastrous to the Muslim prestige.²⁸

(vii) After surrendering, the Banu al-Nadir requested to leave with their belongings, except weapons. They went with six hundred camels.²⁹

(viii) Some settled in the Jewish town of Khayber, where they started conspiring against the Muslims.³⁰

(ix) The Prophet's order to "kill any Jew that falls into your power" comes from Ibn Ishaq without context. The order seems drastic since it was unenforceable in the third year of migration when there were 40,000 Jews in Medina. Further, it appears that Ibn Sunaynah was the only Jew who had this fate.³¹

Banu Qurayza

The story of Banu Qurayza as told by Ibn Ishaq is riddled with inconsistencies and reflects the author's bias against Jews. The massacre of 600-900 Jews is mentioned with no indication of any wartime sentiment. Much has been said against Ibn Ishaq's methodology of reporting events in Medina. The great Traditionist Malik bin Anas called him a 'dajjal' (charlatan), and Hisham bin Urwah did not consider him worthy of credence.³²

Ibn Ishaq follows the pattern of providing reliable *isnad* (authorities) throughout the *Sirah*. "With the Banu Qurayza the pattern seems to break down. Most of the main events ... are not preceded by *isnads*. Several reliable reporters like al-Zuhri and Qatadah appear...but a closer examination discloses that they are reporting minor details, not the major events. Robson observes, '...Ibn Ishaq is quite open about his methods. ... We may therefore be inclined to trust him [only] when he does quote direct authorities and when he gives connected *isnads*.'" ³³ "... Imam Malik had a fuller knowledge of the *qass* (traditional) material...and was in a position to locate the stories which originated from the sons of the Jewish converts. Ibn Ishaq seems to have seen no harm in incorporating this material in his *Sirah* without verification and without *isnad*. Imam Malik objected to this procedure. Levi Della Vida confirms our view:

"Jewish history contains no reference to it [the treatment of the three Jewish tribes]. It is improbable and difficult,

however, to believe that in the second and third centuries of Islam when Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Sa'd were collecting their material, the learned rabbis of the Gaonate and the Exilarchate of Babylon were unable to obtain the Jewish version of the events which had a profound influence on the life of the Jewish community of the Hijaz at the time of the Apostle. It is not normal with the Jews not to record their misfortunes. The Jews of Khaybar reported to be expelled by Umar were settled in Kufa, which was not very far from the Gaonate. They were the descendents of the Banu al-Nadir and the children of the Banu Quraizah..., [but there are no] reports [on] the expulsion of the Banu Qaynuqa and the Banu al-Nadir nor the execution of the Banu Qurayza. ”³⁵

“The punishment of Banu Qurayza is unique in the life of the Prophet. But in this lively discussion both sides seem to have paid little attention to critical examination of the evidence. The Western scholar quoted Ibn Ishaq, al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd and the Muslim apologist answered back with Deuteronomy and 2 Samuel.”³⁶

W. N. Arafat makes the following observations: “Ibn Ishaq died in 151 A.H., i.e. 145 years after the event in question. Later historians simply take his version of the story, omitting more or less of the detail, and overlooking his uncertain list of authorities. ... One authority, Ibn Hajar, however, denounces this story and the other related ones as “odd tales”. A contemporary of Ibn Ishaq, Malik, the jurist, denounces Ibn Ishaq outright as “a liar” and “an impostor” just for transmitting such stories.”³⁷

Exegetes and traditionalists tend simply to repeat Ibn Ishaq's tale, but in the Qur'an the reference can only be to those who were actually in the fighting. Some of these were killed, others were taken prisoner.

One would think that if 600 or 900 people were killed in this manner there would have been a clearer reference in the Qur'an, a conclusion to be drawn, and a lesson to be learnt. But when only the guilty leaders were executed, it would be normal to expect only a brief reference.

(ii) The rule in Islam is to punish only those responsible for the sedition.

(iii) To kill such a large number is diametrically opposed to the Islamic sense of justice - particularly : “No soul shall bear another's burden.”

(iv) It is also against the Qur'anic rule regarding prisoners of war: either they are granted freedom or else ransomed.

(v) It is unlikely that the Banu Qurayza should be slaughtered when the other Jewish groups who surrendered *before* and *after* them were treated leniently. Indeed when Khaybar fell to the Muslims there were among the residents a particular family who had distinguished themselves by excessive unseemly abuse of the Prophet. Yet the Prophet addressed them : “Sons of Abu al-Huqayq, I have known the extent of your hostility to God and to His apostle, yet that does not prevent me from treating you as I treated your brethren.” That was *after* their surrender.

(vi) If indeed so many had been put to death, it is strange that there should be no trace of it.

(vii) Had this slaughter actually happened, jurists would have adopted it as a precedent. However, jurists have behaved according to the Qur'anic rule, “No soul shall bear another's burden.”

Indeed, Abu 'Ubayd b. Sallam relates in his book of jurisprudence of Islamic law that in the time of the Imam al-Awza'i there was a case of trouble among a group of the People of the Book in Lebanon. The regional governor put down the sedition and ordered the community to be moved. Al-Awza'i immediately objected, “As far as I know it is not a rule of God that God should punish the many for the fault of the few but punish the few for the fault of the many.” Had Imam al-Awza'i accepted the story of the slaughter of Banu Qurayza, he would not have come out with an argument against the regional governor.

(viii) In the story of Qurayza a few specific persons were named as having been put to death. It is reasonable that those were the ones who led the sedition and were punished - not the whole tribe.

(ix) The details given in the story imply knowledge from among the Jews. Such are the details of their consultation when they were besieged, the harangue of Ka'b b. Asad as their leader; and the suggestion that they should kill their women and children and make an attack against the Muslims.

(x) Just as the descendants of Qurayza would want to glorify their ancestors, so did the descendants of the Madanese. One notices that the part of the story on the

judgment of Sa'd b. Mu'adh against Qurayza, was transmitted from one of his direct descendants. According to this part, the Prophet said to Mu'adh: “You have pronounced God's judgement upon them [as inspired] through Seven Veils.” For the purposes of glorifying their ancestors or white washing those inimical to Islam, many stories were invented by later generations, much of which was transmitted by Ibn Ishaq.

(xi) Other details are difficult to accept. How could so many hundreds be incarcerated in the house belonging to a woman of Banu al-Najjar?

(xii) The history of the Jewish tribes after the establishment of Islam is not clear. The idea that they all departed seems unlikely, as can be seen on examining the sources. For example, in his *Jamharat al-ansab*, Ibn Hazm occasionally refers to Jews living in Medina. In two places, al-Waqidi mentions Jews who were in Medina when the Prophet prepared to march against Khaybar. In one case ten Madanese Jews actually joined the Prophet in an excursion to Khaybar. ³⁸

Barakat Ahmad observes:

(i) Ibn Ishaq reports that the apostle besieged the Banu Qurayza for 25 nights. But Ibn Sa'd says 15 days. ³⁹

(ii) The speech attributed to Ka'b b. Asad, the leader of Banu Qurayza, was written in the spirit of latter day history. ⁴⁰

(iii) The alleged dialogue between Ka'b and his people inside the fort has elements that contradict Jewish law and are devoid of logic. ⁴¹

(iv) The verse quoted by Ibn Hisham supposedly for Abu Lubabah's forgiveness was revealed later after the expedition of Tabuk (9/630). ⁴⁵

(v) The evidence for Sa'd's selection as arbitrator is contradictory and mutually exclusive. ⁴⁶

(vi) There was a ready-made trench dug outside Medina just a month before for the Battle of the Ditch. Why, rather than digging a new trench, was it not used for disposal of bodies to avoid sanitation problems in Medina? ⁴⁸

(vii) There is absolutely no account of the effect a mass execution on the spectators or the executioners. It is human nature that one could not come away from such an unprecedented holocaust without damage to their personality. ⁴⁹

(viii) It is significant that neither Bukhari nor Muslim reported any Tradition on the actual execution of Sa'd's judgement, or the number of people killed or taken prisoner.⁵¹

(ix) The story that the captive women and children of Banu Qurayza were sent to the Najd to be sold for horses and weapons does not agree with the practice. The Jews of Khayber, including the Banu al-Nadir, Wadi al-Qura, Tayma, and even Medina were capable of buying these captives, and, as al-Waqidi says, they bought them.⁵²

(x) Ibn Ishaq reports the division of Banu Qurayza property. His account is categorically dismissed by later independent jurists as inaccurate and unsubstantiated.⁵³

A detailed scrutiny indicates that the whole story of this massacre is dubious. Ibn Khuldun rightly points out that "the rule of distinguishing what is true from what is false in history is based on its possibility or impossibility."⁵⁴ Medina in those days simply was not equipped to imprison four to five thousand people, nor to execute 600 to 900 people in one day.⁵⁵

Fortunately Ibn Ishaq has left some tell-tale references. It appears there was fierce fighting before the Banu Qurayza surrendered. On the last day, three Muslims died in battle. Although it is not known how many of Banu Qurayza died, we do know that they surrendered. A party from among them who had fought was taken prisoner. The leaders of the Banu Qurayza were left to the judgement of Sa'd b. Mua'dh. There are indications that the sentencing was done on the spot. Bukhari and Muslim support that Sa'd decreed that the 'fighting men' from among the leaders should be executed. This party was dispatched on the spot. In conformity with the Prophet's policy that executions should be done by a member of the tribe in alliance with the tribe of the guilty party, minor leaders were given to the Aws. The culpable leadership of a tribe of less than 1000 men, especially when some have been killed in battle and some taken captive, would not exceed sixteen or seventeen. The whole tribe could not be given the same punishment as their leaders. The Prophet himself was bound by "an eye for an eye and a life for a life (2:178)." ⁵⁶

Subsequently, the Prophet took care to obliterate bitterness. A defeated adversary was almost always won over by marriage. According to Rodinson, "His marriages were not simply love matches; they were political alliances." The union with Rayhanah was a

political announcement that the Prophet was making another attempt to win the friendship of the Banu Qurayza through marriage with one of them. The gesture would have been impossible if all men had been slain, and women and children sold as slaves.⁵⁸

The *Sahifah*, widely accepted as 'unquestionably authentic,'⁵⁹ was finalized soon afterwards and named seven Jewish tribes that became part of the *ummah*. Ibn Ishaq gives us two additional names.⁶⁰ There is ample evidence that the Jews were conducting business as usual in Medina at the time of the Prophet's death.⁶¹

In the same year as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with the Meccans and the Battle of Khyber in which 93 Jews were killed, the Prophet negotiated a peace treaty with the Jews, took Safiyah in marriage, and thus sealed his alliance with the most important Jewish power in the Hijaz.⁶³

"In less than twenty years after the death of the Apostle they (the Jews) ... took the fullest advantage of the somatic, intellectual, and spiritual comforts offered by the dominant [Muslim] elite without disappearing as a marginal minority. ♦

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Endnotes

1. Ahmad, Barakat. *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination*. (New Delhi, India: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1979) Page 10
2. Ibid. Page 11
3. New Light on the Story of Banu Qurayza and the Jews of Medina, By W. N. Arafat <http://www.haqq.com.au/~salam/misc/qurayza.html>
4. According to Guillaume, Bukhari and Muslim together "form an almost unassailable authority, subject indeed to criticism in details." Guillaume, Alfred, *The Traditions of Islam: An Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature* (Oxford, 1924) pp 30-32.
5. Qur'an 17: 5-12
6. Qur'an 10: 94
7. Ahmad, Barakat. *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination*. Page 55
8. Ibid. Page 57
9. Al-Waqidi, Vol. 1, p. 176
10. Ibn Hisham, p 545
11. Ahmad, p 58
12. Ibid. p 58
13. Ibid. p 59
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid. p 60
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. pp 60-61
20. Ibid. p 61

21. Ibid. p 62
22. Ibid. p 52
23. Ibid. p 62
24. Ibid. p 63
25. Ibn Lahi'ah reports "and they sent secretly to the Quraysh when they encamped at Uhud (625) in order to fight the Prophet and they incited them to fight and showed them the weak spots." Ibid. p 63
26. Ibid. p 64
27. Ibid. p 64
28. Ibid. p 66
29. Khan, Muhammad Zafrullah, *Muhammad: Seal of the Prophet*, chapter 9. http://alislam.org/library/books/muhammad_seal_of_the_prophets/chapter_09.html
30. Ibid
31. Ahmad, Barakat. *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination*. pp 19-20
32. Ibid. p 11
33. Ibid. p 13
34. Ibid. p 16
35. Ibid. p 24
36. Ibid. p 23
37. New Light on the Story of Banu Qurayza and the Jews of Medina, By W. N. Arafat <http://www.haqq.com.au/~salam/misc/qurayza.html>
38. Ibid.
39. Ahmad, Barakat. *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination*. Page 73
40. Ibid. pp 74-76
41. Ibid. p 75
42. Ibid. p 75
43. Ibid. p 88
44. Ibid. p 84
45. Ibid. p 77
46. Ibid. p 80
47. Ibid. pp 84-85
48. Ibid. p 84
49. Ibid. p 85
50. Ali and Zubayr's holocaust legacy of massive deadness would not have left them in peace. We see in later accounts of Ali's life that he was kind-hearted. Ibid. p 86
51. Ibid. p 88
52. Ibid. p 88
53. Ibid. p 89
54. Vide R. A. Nicholson, *A literary History of the Arabs* (Repr. Cambridge, 1966), p 438
55. Ahmad, Barakat. *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination*. Page 85
56. Ibid. p 90-91
57. Ibid. p 92
58. Ibid. p 123
59. R. B. Serjeant, "The Constitution of Medina," *The Islamic Quarterly*, VIII (January-June 1964), p. 3.
60. Ahmad, Barakat. *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination* Page 94
61. Ibid. p 123
62. Ibid. p 100
63. 123
64. Joel Carmichael, *The Shaping of the Arabs: A Study in Ethnic Identity* (New York, 1967), p. 54.

Rationale behind the names of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an

By Amtul Mussawir Mansoor

In *Secrets of the Koran*, Don Richardson says, "Various translations of the Qur'an differ slightly in how they name the chapters..., suggesting that the chapters of the Holy Qur'an are named differently in various copies of the Holy Qur'an. In reality, however, the names of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an have not changed since the Holy Qur'an was standardized during the time of Hadhrat Uthman^{ra}.

The chapters of the Holy Qur'an are named according to the subject matter of each chapter. Some are named after an important incident described in the particular chapter. Either way, the names of the chapters shine light upon the subject of the chapter.

The names of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an were given in one of two ways: revelation by God to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}, or were named by the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} himself. There is a tradition related by Abu Daud, Tirmadhi and Ahmad, that: "Hadhrat Uthman^{ra} explained the practice as to the writing of the revelations of the Holy Qur'an: 'It was customary with the Messenger of God^{saw}, when portions of different chapters were revealed to him, that when any verse was revealed, he called one of the recorders who used to write the Holy Qur'an and said to him; 'Write these verses in the chapter where such and such verses occur' indicating at the same time to which chapter and where they belonged." These traditions indicate that the names of chapters have existed and remained the same since the time of the Holy Prophet^{saw}. Therefore, neither the Holy Qur'an nor any of its translations differ in how they name the chapters of the Holy Qur'an.

Further, in the days of early Islam when Hadhrat Umar^{ra} was still a non-Muslim, Hadhrat Umar set out one day to kill the Holy Prophet^{saw} but later found out that his own sister and brother-in-law had converted to Islam. Enraged, Hadhrat Umar turned his steps to his sister's house. Ibn-i-Hisham relates: 'At that time there was in the house a third man, Khabbab,

son of Art, who had with him a volume in which was written Ta Ha (the twentieth Chapter of the Holy Qur'an) which he was teaching to Umar's sister and her husband. When they perceived Umar^{ra} coming, Khabbab hid himself in a corner of the house, and Fatima, Umar's sister, took the volume and hid.' The story continues that Umar^{ra} entered the house and unintentionally hit Fatima. Upon seeing his sister in that hurt condition, Hadhrat Umar became filled with remorse and he asked his sister to show him the leaves upon which Sura Ta Ha was written. After reading a few verses, Hadhrat Umar^{ra} immediately converted to Islam. This clearly shows that the chapters of the Holy Qur'an were named at the time of Holy Prophet^{saw}.

Similarly, the Holy Prophet^{saw} said: "Whoever reads the last two verses of the chapter entitled *Baqara* on any night, they are sufficient for him." (Bukhari)

Over the 23 year period, 114 chapters of the Holy Qur'an were revealed and the arrangement of the chapters was divinely attributed by Allah through Angel Gabrael to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. During the Holy Prophet's^{saw} last month of Ramadhan, Angel Gabriel came twice to the Holy Prophet^{saw} and they recited the entire text of the Holy Qur'an together twice. From that moment on, Allah's promise has stood firm: "*We Ourselves has sent down this Exhortation, and We will most surely safeguard it.*" (Ch.15: v.10)◆

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Refutation of Richardson's Arguments about War Verses of the Holy Qur'an

By Atif Munawar Mir

The idea of the sanctity of human life is deeply embedded in the Holy Qur'an. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that the true spirit of Holy Qur'an is social peace and justice. Don Richardson completely ignores this spirit when discussing the war verses of the Holy Qur'an in his book, *Secrets of the Koran*. The Holy Qur'an recognizes that war is part of the human condition and permits Muslims to fight in defense. But Richardson does not see the war verses as defensive; instead, he launches a vehement attack on the life of the Holy Prophet and relies on extravagant statements to establish that Osama bin Laden's terrorist actions somehow reflect the true spirit of Islam².

Because the arguments and context of most of the war verses Richardson uses are the same, I will address only some of the verses he has quoted.

Islam Permits Only Just Wars

The Holy Qur'an prohibits Muslims to fight wars without just cause. The Promised Messiah^{as} characterizes a just war as war in self-defense, war as chastisement for aggression, or war for the establishment of freedom of conscience.¹

Problem with Richardson's Arguments

The three methodological principles that Don Richardson relies on to formulate his arguments and reach his conclusions are: (1) relying on seven different translations of the Holy Qur'an for his book, (2) taking verses out of historical and textual context in an attempt to prove his case, and (3) dismissing Quranic verses, which preach freedom of conscience, as allegedly abrogated verses.

Quranic Translation

When quoting the Quranic verses, he largely fails to mention which of the seven translations he is relying on. One translation has been completed by Reverend J.M. Rodwell from the 19th century. Reverend Rodwell has been accused of bringing a strongly biblical perspective to the translation of the Holy Qur'an and his footnotes are often criticized as incorrect³. Thus, for

“O ye who believe! Equitable retaliation in the matter of the slain is prescribed for you...

But if one is granted any remission by one's brother, then pursuing the matter for the realization of the blood money shall be done with fairness and the murderer shall pay him the blood money in a handsome manner. This is alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. And whoso transgresses thereafter, for him there shall be a grievous punishment.”(2:179)

the benefit of the readers, when quoting Quranic verses, the author should clearly indicate which translation he is using to ensure that readers can do their own research as to the qualifications and motivations of the translator.

Quranic References without Historical and Textual Context

Richardson uses simplistic methodology to prove his point by picking out certain verses and presenting them without context. For instance, he quotes: “Believers! Retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed. (2:178)” Stripped of any historical and textual context, this verse creates a false association between the Holy Qur'an and bloodshed. In reality, however, this verse comprises a “very important principle of civil law, i.e., equality of man and necessity of awarding proportionate punishment to all offenders without distinction, unless an offender is forgiven by the relatives of his victims under circumstances that are calculated to lead to improvement and betterment of conditions.”⁴ Here is the same verse (2:179) with textual context and proper translation:

“O ye who believe! Equitable retaliation in the matter of the slain is prescribed

“Fight against them until idolatry is no more and God's religion reigns supreme. But if they desist, fight none except the evil-doers. ”(2:193)

“And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.” (2: 191)

“And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them out from where they have driven you out; for persecution is worse than killing. And fight them not in, and near, the Sacred Mosque until they fight you therein. But if they fight you, then fight them: such is the requital for the disbelievers.” (2: 192)

for you... But if one is granted any remission by one's brother, then pursuing the matter for the realization of the blood money shall be done with fairness and the murderer shall pay him the blood money in a handsome manner. This is alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. And whoso transgresses thereafter, for him there shall be a grievous punishment.”

Richardson also calls Muslims who present Islam as a tolerant religion “spin doctors”. He argues that Islam does not grant freedom of religion and quotes: “Fight against them until idolatry is no more and God's religion reigns supreme. But if they desist, fight none except the evil-doers. (2:193)”.

Stripped of any existential, historical and textual context, this verse grossly misleads read-

“But if they desist, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.” (2:193)

“And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah. But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.” (2: 194)

ers. When the preceding and following verses are read, however, it becomes clear that Islam treats war only as a tool of self defense. The verses below establish that the Holy Qur'an permits Muslims to wage war on the enemy *after* war has broken out; but, once the enemy has been subdued or freedom of conscience has been restored, war must come to an end.

The Holy Qur'an says:

“And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.” (2: 191)

“And kill them wherever you meet them and drive them *out from where they have driven you out*; for persecution is worse than killing. And fight them not in, and near, the Sacred Mosque *until they fight you therein*. But if they fight you, then fight them: such is the requital for the disbelievers.” (2: 192)

“But *if they desist*, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.” (2:193)

“And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is freely professed for Allah. But *if they desist*, then remember that *no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.*” (2: 194)

Richardson also associates Quranic verses with genocide through his faulty logic. For instance, he asserts that the Quranic verse from *Chapter Anfal*, which commands Muslims to “strike off their (disbelievers) heads...strike off their finger tips...because they defied God and his Apostle”, somehow justified the Turkish

***When thy Lord revealed to the angels, saying, 'I am with you; so give firmness to those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Smite, then, the upper parts of their necks, and smite off all finger-tips.'* (8:13)**

If one reads Chapter 8, Anfal in its entirety, however, it becomes abundantly clear that the Chapter is not encouraging Muslims to commit genocide, but is preparing Muslims to fight their first battle against a much stronger enemy.

mass slaughter of some 1 million Armenian Christians in the early 1900s.⁵ If one reads *Chapter Anfal* in its entirety, however, it becomes abundantly clear that the *Chapter* is not encouraging Muslims to commit genocide, but is preparing Muslims to fight their first battle against a much stronger enemy. The Chapter opens with the description of the Battle of *Badr* with a prophecy that Muslims will win this war despite the odds against them, and, thus, are ordered to fight courageously.⁶ The Battle of *Badr* was the first battle fought by Muslims against an army three times their size and with superior equipment. The survival of the Muslim community was at stake. As such, the imagery of the verse is purposeful in ensuring that the community did not waver in its valor.

Quranic Verses Ignored by Don Richardson

Richardson also purposely brushes aside as abrogated those verses which

preach tolerance and compassion. For example, the author dismisses the Quranic verse that says there is no compulsion in religion. In asserting that any verses have been abrogated, Richardson is going against the overwhelming majority of Muslims who do not believe in the concept of abrogation, but that the Holy Qur'an in its entirety remains relevant for all Muslims, especially those verses preaching freedom of conscience, peaceful coexistence of humanity, salvation for non-Muslims, racial and economic equality and recognizing human diversity:

"There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong..." (2:257)

The verse below establishes that freedom of conscience is granted to all religions, and that the burning of any place of worship is not condoned by the Holy Qur'an, but instead it is incumbent upon Muslim states to protect their religious minorities :

"Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' — And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty." (22:41)

The Holy Qur'an also instructs Muslims how to treat prisoners of wars—releasing them as a good gesture, or for ransom after the aggressor has been defeated.

"And when you meet in regular battle those who disbelieve, smite their necks; and, when you have overcome them, bind fast the fetters — then afterwards either release them as a favour or by taking ransom — until the war lays down its burdens." (47:5)

Additionally, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} also laid down rules for war time: (1) the old and women and children are not to be killed, and the possibility of peace should always be kept in view (*Abu Dawud*), (2) when Muslims enter enemy territory, they should not strike terror into the general population, and should not permit ill-treatment of common folk (*Muslim*),

(3) the least possible losses should be inflicted upon the enemy (*Abu Dawud*), and (4) when a Muslim takes charge of a prisoner of war, the latter is to be fed and clothed in the same way as the Muslim feeds and clothes himself (*Bukhari*).

Misrepresenting Quranic War Verses is not Good for Peace

No doubt, Muslims in the last 1400 years have committed violent acts that cannot be justified by the Holy Qur'an and Ahadith. But relying on violence to achieve political objectives under the camouflage of religion is also practiced by others under the cloak of faiths such as Christianity. All religions contain extremist elements. The good news, however, is that the majority of the faithful believe in peaceful coexistence. This peaceful majority should combine their intellectual and spiritual resources to eradicate the extremist elements in their midst. When extremists win, humanity loses. Richardson should work towards building bridges not erecting walls. ♦

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Endnotes

¹ Please note that Ahmadiyya Muslim community treats "In the name of Allah the gracious and merciful" as the part of the Surah but not by other Muslims. As a result, when the translation of the Holy Qur'an used by Don Richardson is compared to the translation prepared by Ahmadiyya community, the references might be off by one verse.

² Don Richardson, "Violent Verses, Violent Deeds", *Secrets of Holy Qur'an*, Regal, USA, 2003, p. 55³ Haleem, Abdel, "Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Styles, I.B. Tauris, London and New York, 2001, p. xxviii-xxix⁴

⁴ The Holy Qur'an, English Translation and Commentary, Edited by Malik Ghulam Farid, First Edition, 1969., p. 73

⁵ Don Richardson, p. 55

⁶ The Holy Qur'an, English Translation and Commentary, Edited by Malik Ghulam Farid, First Edition, 1969., p. 375

Dhimmis & Jizya

Don Richardson's book entitled, *Secrets of the Koran* has dedicated chapter ten to making allegations against Islam for the abusive and supremacist treatment meted out to non-Muslims under Muslim rule, known as *dhimmis*. He uses several references from two authors: Bat Ye'or and Ibn Warraq. These authors point to alleged abusive practices perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire and Muslim governments throughout history.

By Naser Shams

As is typically the case with Islamophobic propagandists, the scholarship is underwhelming. However, it is important to expose them because authors like Richardson exploit the ignorance of the masses and prop themselves up as experts in areas in which they lack fundamental knowledge.

In making accusations of cruel and oppressive treatment of non-Muslims, Richardson, as well as Bat Ye'or and Ibn Warraq, *coincidentally* ignores several fundamental and foundational aspects of this topic. First, and most embarrassing, they conveniently overlook the teachings in their own Bible. Second, they conspicuously ignore the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and focus on those writings that deviate from Quranic teachings. Third, they have ignored the example of the Holy Prophet's treatment of non-Muslims. Fourth, they ignore context.

Biblical Atrocities

When quoting from the Bible it is important to understand that Christians believe *every* word to be "inspired by God." With that basis, when Moses warred against the Midianites, the treatment of their enemies is documented in the Book of Numbers:

"...[the Israelites under Moses' command] slew all the males... And the Children of Israel [i.e. the Israelites] took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with

fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts... And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? ...therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him..." [31:7-]

The above verses indicate that the armies of Moses, under the command of God (who is believed by Christians to be Jesus), killed all males, seized all women, children and wealth, and burned the cities to the ground. The Israelites then killed all of the defenseless male children and all female widows, saving the female children for themselves. How did Richardson, Bat Ye'or and Ibn Warraq conveniently overlook this incident from their Holy Books?

In another Biblical example we see deception as the basis of indiscriminately slaughtering defenseless people who differed in beliefs. In Chapter 10 of II Kings, verses 18 to 25, Jehu, the king, after seizing control of Samaria, cunningly orchestrated a plan to congregate the

worshippers of Baal, an idol god, into a temple where he was going to provide an offering to Baal. Instead, Jehu surrounded the temple with armed men and ordered them to kill all the people inside and then burn the temple to the ground. One wonders why a repentance was not considered.

These, and other instances from the Bible, were perpetrated in situations which may have justified such harsh behavior. Thus, as Muslims, it would be unjustified to criticize without context. Richardson, Bat Ye'or and Ibn Warraq would do well to learn this lesson.

Biblical Version of the Jizya Tax

Whenever a state of war exists there are three possible outcomes:

- Subdue the enemy
- Be subdued by the enemy
- Mutually negotiate a peace treaty

The Holy Qur'an forbids imposing Islamic beliefs on anyone who disagrees with them. It

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protects people who disagree and their rights to maintain their beliefs. The protected party is termed *dhimmi* in Arabic. Although the *dhimmis* could not be levied the Islamic *Zakaat* tax (2 ½ % of their uninvested wealth), they were required to pay a tax called *jizya*, which supported the costs of the army and their protection. Importantly, a *dhimmi* was not required to serve in the army.

This tax of subjects is also documented in the Bible. A few examples of *jizya* in the Bible include:

“He [David] defeated Moab, and measured them with the line, making them lie down on the ground; and he measured two lines to put to death and one full line to keep alive. And the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute.” [II Samuel 8:2]

“Then David put garrisons among the Arameans of Damascus, and the Arameans became servants to David, bringing tribute. And the LORD helped David wherever he went.” [II Samuel 8:6]

“And they brought every man his present [to Solomon], vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.” [I Kings 10:25]

We see that Jesus condoned this levy:

“...Jesus spoke to him first, saying, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?’ When Peter said, ‘From strangers,’ Jesus said to him, ‘Then the sons are exempt.’” [Matt 17:25 to 26]

Thus, it was an accepted norm to pay a *jizya* type of tribute as a subject of a conquering sovereign nation. Although a tax-free world would be nice, it is impractical.

The Prophet's Example

The Holy Prophet was particular in fulfilling his covenants with other parties. The *Ahadith* confirm that he had several treaties with various parties including Jews, Christians and Magians. In following his example, the protected status of *dhimmis* was extended initially to the People of the Book, or Jews and Christians, but later was extended to Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists.

The Holy Prophet admonished Muslims to be mindful of this special pact with non-Muslim minorities. In *Sahih Bukhari*, it is narrated that the Holy Prophet said, “Whoever killed a person having a treaty with the Muslims, shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its aroma radiates a span of forty years” [Book 53, Hadith # 391].

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In another incident the daughter of Abu Bakr, Asma, inquired from the Holy Prophet about her mother who was a pagan. Specifically, she asked whether she should keep good relations with her mother to which the Holy Prophet readily replied that she should [Bukhari, Book 53, Hadith # 407].

In handling disputes between Muslims and non-Muslims, the Holy Prophet always exercised justice and equity. There was one instance where two Muslims traveled to Khaibar, the Jewish settlement, at a time when there was a peace treaty between them and Muslims. The Muslims parted and later on found a Muslim murdered. Naturally, the Muslim suspected the Jews. The Muslims, thus, complained to the Prophet of this suspicion, but the Prophet would not accept that as a basis for retaliation. The Prophet asked the Muslims to take an oath of who the murderer was, but they replied they had not witnessed the act. Then the Prophet stated that, similarly, the Jews can take an oath stating they did not commit the murder. The Muslims then complained about trusting the oaths of disbelievers. At that, the Holy Prophet himself paid the blood money for the murder, but refused to falsely accuse the Jews without evidence [Bukhari, Book 53, Hadith # 398].

In one of the earliest surviving biographies of the Holy Prophet, the *Sirah Rasool-ullah* by Ibn Ishaq, an account of the Christians from Najran is included. Although the Christians disagreed with Islam, the Holy Prophet allowed them to pray in his mosque without any oppression.

The same biography examines the deteriorating relationship between the Jews and the Muslims. The Prophet tolerated frequent abuses, intrigues and insults from various Jews. For example, at one point he was addressed with *As-Saamu Alaikum*, meaning *Death be upon*

you, a play on the words *As-Salaamu Alaikum*, *Peace be upon you*. Although his wife, Aisha, was enraged, the Prophet gave a mild response, *Wa-Alaikum, And upon you* [Bukhari, Book 84, Hadith # 61]. Jewish attitudes grew more bold and their poetry encouraged attacks on Muslims and the assassination of the Holy Prophet.

Unfortunately, over time the relationship culminated into extreme hostility where the Jewish tribes conspired with the enemy pagans in violation of the standing treaty of co-existence, thus making it a matter of national security for the Muslims. This drew a stern response from the Prophet and resulted in a state of war and the eventual defeat or expulsion of the three Jewish tribes of Medina. Given the circumstances, this treatment was justified and expected by the Jews of Medina who acknowledged their own treachery and exploitation of the Muslim's generosity.

A Need for Common Sense

If Muslims throughout history are in violation of the teachings of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet, it is not today's Muslim's responsibility to defend them insofar as it is not the responsibility of Christians to defend the witch hunts, the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, etc. Those Muslims who deviate from the clear teachings of Islam are to be held accountable for their own actions. However, for Richardson, Bat Ye'or and Ibn Warraq to hold them as the role models of Islam is a blatant advertisement of their underdeveloped scholarship and double standards. ♦

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We, as American citizens, have a patriotic duty to comprehend the dynamics that keep our democracy strong. We should be well-informed and engage the world around us based on fact, not fear. Since 9/11, religious and political elements within the European and American Occident have invigorated their engagement against Islam based on the same stratagems from the past—fear and suspicion. Thus, Islam is seen through a flawed prism of distortion and negative discrimination as the threat to the West; Islam's founding Prophet is scripted as a sex-crazed pedophile who butchered people indiscriminately; the monopoly on religious extremism is Islam's alone; and its adherents are terrorist fanatics lacking compassion and mercy.

Apostasy in Islam

By Alhaj Dhul-Waqar Yaqub

Fortunately for the seekers of truth, reality counters the general media perception of Islam in America. The author and missionary Don Richardson's book *Secrets of the Koran* has the potential to reinforce among non-Muslims the stereotypical views in reference to apostasy in Islam. Richardson's declaration that, "Reverters are tagged as apostates, and the penalty for apostasy under Sharia law is death"¹ reinforces a longstanding conjecture that apostasy in Islam is a capital crime punishable with death.

The objective of this article is to investigate and assess the subject of apostasy in Islam from Holy Qur'an. Ultimately, it will be clear that the concept of apostasy (*irtadda* in Arabic)² as it existed in medieval Christianity is alien to Islam and that the Sharia law of apostasy has nothing to do with Islam.

Methodology

This investigation and assessment of apostasy in Islam requires clarification of the methodology which will be used to deduce facts from the primary source, the Holy Qur'an. This methodology has a standard and fundamental rule:

The standard and fundamental rule pertaining to the correct interpretation of the Qur'an is explained by the Qur'an itself. Allah says, "He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book; in it there are verses that are decisive in meaning – they are the basis of the Book – and there are others that are susceptible to differ-



"There should be no compulsion in religion: Surely, right has become distinct from wrong..."⁵ gives the commandment that under no circumstances may force be resorted to for the purpose of converting non-Muslims to Islam.

*ent interpretations. But those in whose hearts is perversity pursue such thereof as are susceptible of different interpretations, seeking discord and seeking wrong (of their own choice) interpretation of it. And no one knows its right (true) interpretation except Allah and those who are grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; the whole is from our Lord.' And none heed except those gifted with understanding."*³

Thus, the Qur'an has two types of verses: verses that are "decisive in meaning" (*muhkam*), and verses that are "susceptible to different interpretations" (*mutashabih*). The right way to interpret *mutashabih* verses is that their interpretation must agree with the verses that are *muhkam*. If the interpretation of the *mutashabih* verses, does not agree with the *muhkam* verses, then they are to be dismissed as incorrect.⁴

Holy Qur'an: Freedom of Conscience and Belief

Freedom of conscience and belief are the basic principles of Islam. The verse where Allah says, "There should be no compulsion in religion: Surely, right has become distinct from wrong..."⁵ gives the commandment that under no circumstances may force be resorted to for the purpose of converting non-Muslims to Islam. It makes no difference whether non-belief was before or after one's acceptance of Islam. Compelling a person through coercion to accept religion or to punish a person for leaving a religion is clearly forbidden. The nonbeliever and the apostate are entitled to the freedom to accept or reject religion without force or punishment, especially not death.⁶

The above mentioned verse not only

gives the commandment that force should not be used for the purpose of converting non-Muslims to Islam, but it also gives the reason why forced conversion is not a viable option to accepting truth freely. Islam proposes that **“right has become distinct from wrong”** and anyone who has sincerity of the heart or mind may access truth easily.

By the same token, if a person “turns back from his religion,” the same principle will apply. Islam is manifest truth. Anyone who sincerely desires to see this truth can easily see it; but if a person does not desire to see it, no force or punishment can make him see it. Thus, a person who has become a Muslim has the option of renouncing Islam after having declared his faith in it.

Islam’s concept of freedom of conscience and belief is perfectly compatible with one of the most important documents of our time—the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948. Article 18 of the UDHR declares:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Islam’s compatibility with Article 18 of the UDHR follows from **“There shall be no compulsion in religion: Surely, right has become distinct from wrong...”**⁷ and **“...whoever rejects the faith, his work has doubtless come to naught, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.”**⁸ The words, **“rejects the faith”** means turning apostate. Apostasy, however condemnable, is only a *spiritual* offense that is to be settled in the “Hereafter,” not in the temporal world.

The essence of freedom of conscience, belief, and to change one’s religion without any legislative underpinning of punishment by death is clearly stated in the aforementioned Qur’anic verses. However, author and missionary Don Richardson, attempted to dismiss the verse that says, **“There shall be no compulsion in religion: Surely, right has become distinct from wrong...”** (Qur’an 2:257) by alleging that *“...it has been abrogated (i.e. an-*

*nulled, cancelled, replaced)...”*⁹ In reality, there is absolutely no verse in the Qur’an which is abrogated. The Qur’an itself testifies to its own purity and integrity. The well-known verse: **“Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation and most surely We will be its guardian”** (Qur’an 15:10) leads to no other conclusion. If the abrogation of any part of the Qur’an be conceded, the promise about its protection becomes null and void, for in that case it would be impossible to distinguish the abrogated portions from the rest of the Book.¹⁰

Christian critics focus on verses of the Qur’an, which gave the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} and the young Muslim nation the authority to defend themselves from aggressors. These critics are shameless as they take verses out of context to support their points of view. In the Qur’an, Allah says, **“And if they break their oaths after their covenant, and attack your religion, then fight these leaders of disbelief, surely, they have no regard for their oaths that they may desist”** (Qur’an 9:12). The context of this verse is that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW} and the Muslims were subjects of aggression for the purpose of annihilating Islam by force. These aggressors acted treacherously and resorted to all sorts of foul means to annihilate Islam. It was only such men that Muslims had been commanded to fight.

Those who rejected Islam after having believed in it and took up aggression for the purpose of annihilating Islam, however, would be fought not because of their apostasy, but because of their aggression toward Islam. This seems to be the real issue that Christian critics have to face. There is no death penalty associated with apostasy. However, within the context of war, those who took up treason, rebellion or hostility against Islam were fought against as enemies of the Islamic State.

Our Christian critics have unfairly charged Islam with being a religion of war and view Muslims as a bunch of terrorist thugs. No doubt there are Muslim rogues who have hijacked Islam and use Islamic phraseology in carrying out their insanity, but to judge the entire religion based on the

acts of a few is shameful. Can Muslims assess the worth of Christianity based on the rogue behavior of the Ku Klux Klan and be fair-minded? The answer is no.

Conclusion:

Apostasy is the renunciation of Islam by a Muslim. Every Muslim has an option to renounce Islam but no one has the right to declare another apostate. An organization, government agency, Imam or Shariah court cannot declare another an apostate. Apostasy by itself, which is not aggravated by rebellion, treason or aggression against the State, does not incur any penalty or punishment in this life.

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Endnotes

¹ Don Richardson, *Secrets of the Koran*, (Ventura, California, USA, Regal Books/Gospel Light, 2003), p. 24

² Abdul Mannan Omar, *The Dictionary of The Holy Qur’an*, (Hockessin, DE Noor Foundation – International Inc., 2003), p. 207

³ Published under the auspices of Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud, Second Successor of the Promised Messiah, *The Holy Qur’an with English Translation and Commentary*, Vol. 1, Part II, (Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation Ltd., Rabwah, West Pakistan, 1965), 3:8, p.365

⁴ *ibid*, commentary 299, p. 365-368

⁵ *ibid*, commentary 2:257, p.325

⁶ *ibid*, commentary 263, p. 325, 326

⁷ *ibid*, 2:257, p.325

⁸ *ibid*, commentary 5:6, p.605

⁹ Don Richardson, *Secrets of the Koran*, (Ventura, California, USA, Regal Books/Gospel Light, 2003), p. 58

¹⁰ Published under the auspices of Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud, Second Successor of the Promised Messiah, *The Holy Qur’an with English Translation and Commentary*, Vol. 1, Part II, (Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation Ltd., Rabwah, West Pakistan, (1964) 2:107, commentary 113, p. 162-164.

Madrassas in Islam

Ayesha Noor Rashid

In October 2006, more than 80 *madrassa* students were killed in a missile strike in the Bajaur tribal area. Al-Qaida militants were believed to be using the *madrassa* as a shelter. The next day in a convention of 20,000 tribal men, Maulana Faqir Muhammad declared, “our Jihad will continue, God willing,” confirming allegations. *Madrassas*, literally “places for learning/studying,” have existed for over a millennium. *Madrassas* are alleged to be inherent hubs of extremism, but if so, the same must be proved of *madrassas* historical roots.

In his book, *Secrets of the Koran*, Don Richardson discusses the current state of *madrassas*, but assumes what is true of *madrassas* today is true of *madrassas* of days past.

Madrassa history can be traced back to the “*suffah*,” a verandah in Prophet Muhammad’s mosque in Medina which provided shelter to the homeless and needy. Quickly, however, the *suffah* became the first Islamic educational institute, and nurtured many early Islamic scholars. The *suffah* residents were the *As’hab us-Suffah*, spending their lives in austerity with Prophet Muhammad. Among the *As’hab us-Suffah*, Hadhrat Abu Hurairah became renowned for his excellent memory and was the foremost collector of Prophet Muhammad’s sayings (*Hadith*) – collecting a record 5,374 *Ahadith*. Hadhrat Salman al-Farsi was a great scholar of Christianity and Zoroastrianism, and an eminent linguist. Because the *As’hab us-Suffah* also served in the military, they participated in defensive battles. The majority of their lives, however, were spent obtaining education.¹

The *As’hab us-Suffah*’s example reflects the great emphasis Islam lays upon education. In fact, the very first verse of the Holy Qur’an (96:2) revealed to Prophet Muhammad commanded, “Read.” Many of Prophet Muhammad’s traditions echo this emphasis on education. He says, “It is the duty of every Muslim man and every Muslim woman to acquire knowledge” (*Baihiqi*). He further says, “a learned one is superior to a worshipper,” (*Abu Da’ud, Timidhi*). Mr. Rosenthal, a renowned researcher of epistemology in Islam, states:

“There is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of



the daily life of the average Muslim that remained untouched by all-pervasive attitude towards “knowledge” as something of supreme value for Muslim being.”²

According to Rosenthal, there has always been a unique place for education in Muslim society that grew exponentially over the years. Scholars travelled large distances to quench their thirst for knowledge. *Madrassas* served as a breeding ground in developing scholars from early Islam through the medieval era.

Soon after Prophet Muhammad’s death, his mosque, known as “The Prophet’s Mosque”, became a formal institution of education. His companions taught there for several generations. In 972 CE, *Azhar* mosque was founded in Cairo and became the most influential Islamic educational institute. It was not until the early 11th century that formal *madrassas* were created. Preceded by *kutubs* (elementary schools) and mosques, *madrassas* became a third educational institute for exigent scholarly needs. In 1005, the Fatimid Caliphate built the first *madrassa* in Egypt. Within a few decades, the *madrassa*’s library amassed 6500 books on subjects ranging from religion to astronomy. In 1067, Nizamul Mulk Hassan bin Tusi built the second *madrassa* in Baghdad, leading to a network of *madrassas* being built across the entire Islamic empire.

Ample monetary and book donations made pre-colonial era *madrassas* the emblem of prosperity, mostly founded by influential people, including women. Unlike the curriculum of many of today’s *madrassas*, early *madrassas* comprised both religious and secular subjects. For religious education, the Qur’an, books of *Ahadith*, and Arabic were

taught. Additionally, some *madrassas* taught Sufism. In secular studies, logic, medicine and astronomy were a standard curriculum.

Just like the modern education system, lectures were offered throughout the winter while the summer was off. According to a fatwa by a jurist from Algeria:

“During winter, religious scholars taught students exhaustively and meticulously a small number of areas of their expertise, bringing to students’ attention previous research on these issues as well as their own evaluation of this research. During this season, the scholars did not permit themselves to be idle or take any time off.”³

Thus, students could digest issues they studied. Critics such as Don Richardson liken *madrassas* to Nazi camps⁴, whereas the late University of Pennsylvania professor George Makdisi, known as a myth breaker, notes that *madrassas* served as the model for the first European and American universities.⁵

Muslim scholars of that era were versed in conventional Islamic education, excelled in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, economics, anthropology, politics, history and much more. Through a semi-quantitative measure in *History of Science*, George Sarton divides the highest achievements in science into ages of 50 year segments. He notes a continuous succession of segments from 750 to 1100 - 250 years of unprecedented Muslim scholarship dominance in research⁶. The advent of *madrassas* ensured that scholarship throughout the Muslim empire continued. Al Biruni (973-1048), a famous astronomer, astrologist and mathematician, was a *madrassa* graduate. Ibne Sina (980-1037), known as Avicenna in the west, just like *madrassa* students of today, memorized

the Qur'an at age 10. He went on to learn medicine, chemistry, alchemy, physics, mathematics, poetry and psychology and is known as "doctor of doctors". Imam Ghazali (1058-1111), known as Algazel to the west, was also a *madrassa* graduate and an authority on Islamic Theology; his work encompasses logic, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, biology and cosmology. Even the great Persian poet Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (1207-1273), often known simply as Rumi, was a *madrassa* teacher.

The architectural value of some *madrassas* is also important, as they became the principal forms of religious architecture from the 13th to 17th centuries. The *Sulaymaniyya* Complex of Istanbul, the *Sultan Hasan madrassa* of Cairo, the *Ulug Beg madrassa* in Samarkand, the *Hawza* complex in Najaf, and the sanctuary at Qom, Iran are distinguished for their design and beauty. Some *madrassas* served as mosques, hospitals, hospices, large kitchens, fountains, gardens, pools, baths and covered markets. Adorned with beautiful domes, tile mosaic, intricate calligraphy, and floral designs, some *madrassas* occupied multiple buildings, serving as dormitories, lecture rooms and prayer halls.⁷

Thus, exhaustive evidence exists to demonstrate the religious, educational, social and architectural culture and purpose of early *madrassas*, not that they promoted extremism.

It was not until the colonial times that *madrassas* suffered, reflecting the predicament the Muslim *Ummah* faced—internal strife of Muslim rulers, colonization of the Muslim world, and emerging methods of education from the West. This left *madrassas* to serve as the sole institutions to protect Muslims from western influences. Instead of adopting new ways of education in *madrassas*, however, the Muslim clergy discontinued secular education and prevented Muslims from attending western schools. Despite this increasingly monolithic educational curriculum, *madrassas* resisted extremist rhetoric and did not contribute to a rise of militancy in the Muslim world.

Until the first half of the 20th century, *madrassas* were financially impoverished. Thus, Saudis began to spread the Wahhabi school of thought throughout all *madrassas* by financing them, planting the seeds of a narrow-minded and intolerant Muslim clergy⁸. Besides *Wahhabi's*, the Government of Pakistan also played a role

in decaying *madrassas*. The Government of Pakistan started to concede to the Muslim clergy from 1974 when the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was declared to be non-Muslim. Military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq augmented the trend, attempting to implement a corrupt form of *Shariah* in Pakistan. His regime is considered the darkest era in Pakistan's history. General Haq financed *madrassas* with *Zakat* funds, thus providing plentiful funds for the mullahs' extremist machinations. With this type of doctrine infiltrating *madrassas*, subsequent American aid during the Afghan-Soviet war further spread militant ideology.

The U.S. also had a large part to play in the spread of the *madrassas* in Pakistan. Under President Jimmy Carter, the U.S. established a \$500 million fund to prepare *Mujahideen* to fight against the occupying Soviet forces in Kabul. This figure eventually increased to \$4 billion and the project was given the title "Operation Cyclone." It primarily aimed at promoting Jihadi culture in Pakistan, and the establishment of Islamic seminaries was an integral part of the operation.⁹

Although *madrassas* are deteriorating by the day, there are *madrassas* that exist that are like the *madrassas* from early Islam. For instance, *Jamia Ahmadiyya* (originally called *Madrasa Ahmadiyya*) has branches in India, Pakistan, Indonesia, UK, Nigeria, Canada and Germany, with plans to continually expand. Although a primarily religious institute, *Jamia Ahmadiyya* offers secular courses as well. The *Jamia Ahmadiyya* system has functioned for more than 100 years and its graduates are spread all over the world. No *Jamia* graduate or student has ever been associated with militant activities. Besides their excellence in Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic law, *Jamia* graduates have proved their worth in linguistics, history and logic. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (1928-2003), the 4th Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a *Jamia Ahmadiyya* graduate, is world renowned for his intricate knowledge of various sciences. His book "Murder in the Name of Allah" written in 1956 vehemently rejected any form of extremism in the name of Islam well before the very creation of extremist *madrassas*. His scholarly treatise "*Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*" addresses various issues of conflict between the religious and scientific worlds. Maulana Dost Muhammad Shahid (1927-2009), another *Jamia Ahmadiyya* graduate, emerged as a great modern historian, adorned with the title "king of references"

and the 1992-93 "Man of the year" award from the International Biographical Centre of Cambridge.

Further, President Obama was a *madrasa* student in Indonesia at the tender age of 6. Although allegations to the contrary were launched, it has been established that the *madrasa* he attended was a modern *madrasa* that aimed at providing religious and secular education.

For Don Richardson, scholars like Al-Biruni, Imam Ghazali, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Maulana Dost Muhammad Shahid and all Muslims who condemn extremism are only pseudo Muslims¹⁰. In his eyes, *Al Azhar*, *Sulaimaniyya* complex, *Jamia Ahmadiyya* and the *madrasa* President Obama attended are all pseudo *madrassas*. The above facts notwithstanding, Richardson contends that early Muslims were extremists, despite the insurmountable evidence of their emphasis on peace and education.

Indeed, Don Richardson's most revealing secret is his failed attempt to hide 1000 years of enlightenment behind a mere 30 years of admitted indiscretion. ♦

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Endnotes

¹ See Adam Hani Walker, *As'hab us-Suffa: Great lovers of the Holy Prophet*

² See Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge triumphant: the concept of knowledge in medieval Islam*. Pg 2. (Leiden: Brill, 1970)

³ See Wadad Kadi, *Education in Islam: Myths and Truths*, Comparative Education Vol. 50. No 3.

⁴ See Don Richardson, *Secrets of Koran*. Pg 179

⁵ S. Zaimeche, *Fallacies surrounding the decline of Muslim civilization*, Foundation for Science, Technology and Civilization, June 2004.

⁶ Abdus Salam, *Islam and Science: Concordance or Conflict*. Review of Religions, March 1995

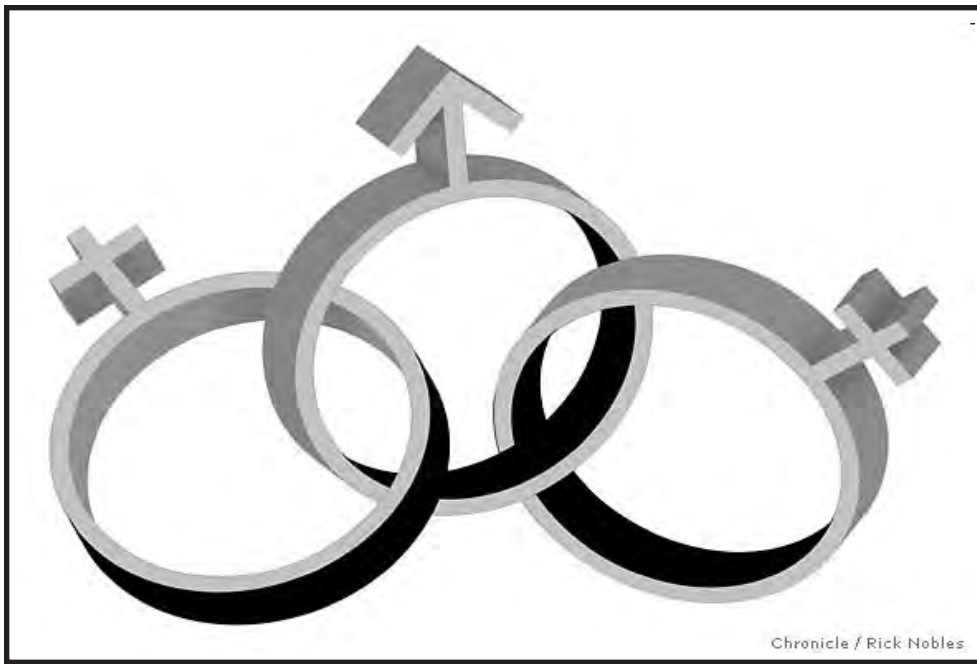
⁷ See Andrew Peterson, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*, 1999

⁸ See Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, *Murder in the Name of Allah*, 1956 and C. D Malbouisson, *Islamic Religious Schools "Madrassas"*, background, 2007

⁹ Paul M. P. Bell, *Pakistan*

¹⁰ 's *Madrassas-Weapons of Mass Instruction?* Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 2007.

¹⁰ Don Richardson, *Secrets of Koran*, Pg 179



Polygamy in the Holy Qur'an and the life of Holy Prophet^{saw}

Khaula Rehman MD

Islam is a universal religion for all times to come and has a universal approach applicable to all times and circumstances. The Holy Qur'an tackled certain social issues or vices that were of paramount concern in an emphatic manner; other issues dealt with in a gradual and incremental manner; yet others it left to the wisdom of the societies and individuals. When Islam was revealed 14 centuries ago there were no well-defined rules about marriage, not only in Arab society, but Christian society, too. Numerous Roman census declarations attest to many husbands and wives being siblings. Some of these incestuous relationships were even in the royal family, such as the Roman Emperor Claudius, the Roman Emperor Caligula, the Roman Emperor Nero and Queen Agrippina (mother of Nero). The famous historian Edward Gibbon has dedicated a chapter to the Emperor of Byzantine, Heraclius, who was a contemporary of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}, in his book *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He writes, "Heraclius ... was detained from the defense of his Empire by the charms, and per-

haps the arts, of his niece Martina, with whom, after the death of Eudocia, he contracted an incestuous marriage."¹ Islam is vehemently opposed to incestuous marriages and the Holy Qur'an categorically forbade this and described very precise boundaries:

"Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your fathers' sisters, and your mothers' sisters, and brother's daughters, and sister's daughters, and your foster-mothers that have given you suck, and your foster-sisters, and the mothers of your wives, and your stepdaughters, who are your wards by your wives with whom you have consorted, but if you have not consorted with them, there shall be no sin upon you, and the wives of your sons that are from your loins; and it is forbidden to you to have two sisters together in marriage, except what has already passed; surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful." (Al Qur'an 4:24)

Islam set these boundaries for both Muslims and Christians. Polygamy was never forbidden in the religious scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. The first instance of polygamy in the Bible was that of Lamech in Genesis 4:19: "Lamech married two women." Several prominent men in the Old Testament were polygamists: Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, Moses and others all had multiple wives. In 2 Samuel 12:8, God, speaking through the prophet Nathan, said that if David's wives and concubines were not enough, God would have given David even more. Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines, according to 1 Kings 11:3.

All through human history it has been recognized that in certain circumstances and under certain conditions polygamy is not only permissible but fully justified. The main purpose of marriage is the safeguarding of chastity. That very purpose might make polygamy desirable and even necessary in certain cases.

The Holy Qur'an neither prohibits polygamy nor mandates it. The verse regarding polygamy was revealed after the Battle of Uhud when many Muslim men were killed, leaving many widows and orphans behind. This permission was given to safeguard the rights of the women and children and to prevent their social and moral degradation in a society where mostly men were earning members. It can be deduced from this verse that the Holy Qur'an actually encouraged monogamy, while not prohibiting polygamy:

"And if you will fear that you will not be fair in dealing with the orphans, then marry of women as may be agreeable to you, two or three or four and if you fear you will not deal justly, then marry only one or what your right hand possesses. That is the nearest way to avoid injustice." (Al Qur'an 4:4)

This verse was not permitting polygamy as some new invention, but was putting bounds on a practice that had always existed.

The Holy Prophet married twelve times in his life. In his youth, however, the Holy Prophet was married to one woman, Hadhrat Khadija, for fifteen years, and did not engage in any wild and lighthearted amusements. After Hazrat Khadija all of his marriages, except to Hazrat Ayesha, were with either widows or divorcees with young children who otherwise had no prospects. All his marriages were to fulfill the responsibilities of his prophethood, to pass on Islam to the next generations as a practical legacy. By marrying these pious women, he was able to insure that the female population was adequately trained in the new religion. With his marriages he taught Muslims compassion with women and abolished certain customs, and removed the social stigmas that were so firmly attached to slaves, widows, elderly women and divorcees. To the Muslim society, he proved that there was nothing undesirable in these types of women as marriage prospects.

Most of his marriages were after migration to Medina. During those eight years he had to fight defensive wars, teach Islam, lead daily prayers, and he was spending most of his night in prayer. If one analyzes the kind of heavy responsibilities he had during that time period, one would wonder how much time he

was spending with his wives. It must also be remembered that the faith that he preached forbade intoxicants, looked unfavorably on comforts and luxuries, and that the Holy Prophet's own life was a model of simplicity and rigorous asceticism.

The Holy Qur'an has inculcated the spirit that should inspire the relationship between husband and wife: 'Of His Signs it is that He has created mates for you of your own species that you may find peace of mind through them, and He has put love and tenderness between you.' (30:22). Then there is the admonition, 'Consort with them graciously. Should you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good' (4:20). The Holy Prophet summed it up in these words, 'The best among you is the one who treats his spouse well and in that respect I am better than all of you.' (Tirmidhi)

An American Justice Pierre Craibites has rightly observed, "Muhammad, 1300 years ago assured to the mothers, wives, and daughters of Islam a rank and dignity not yet generally assured to women by the laws of the West."² Karen Armstrong also wrote in her book *Muhammad: a Prophet for our times*:

"The Qur'anic institution of polygamy was a piece of social legislation. It was designed not to gratify the male sexual appetite, but to correct the injustices done to widows, orphans, and other female dependants, who were especially vulnerable. All too often, unscrupulous people seized everything and left the weaker members of the family with nothing. They were often sexually abused by their male guardians or converted into a financial asset by being sold into slavery. Ibn Ubayy, for example, forced his women slaves into prostitution and pocketed the proceeds. The Qur'an bluntly refutes this behavior and takes it for granted that a woman has an inalienable right to her inheritance. Polygamy was designed to ensure that unprotected women would be decently married, and to abolish the old loose, irresponsible liaisons; men could have only four wives and must treat them equitably; it was an unjustifiably wicked act to devour their property.

The Qur'an was attempting to give women a legal status that most Western women would not enjoy until the nineteenth century. The emancipation of women was a project dear to the Prophet's heart, but it was resolutely opposed by many men in the *ummah*, including some of his closest companions. In a society

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Karen Armstrong also wrote in her book *Muhammad: a Prophet for our times*:

of scarcity, it took courage and compassion to take financial responsibility for four women and their children. Muslims must have confidence that God would provide."³

It is in this light and context that marriages of the Holy Prophet should be understood. Whereas other Muslims were given a limit of four wives in the Holy Qur'an, the Divine command for the Holy Prophet was more liberal in order to allow him to discharge his religious, social and political responsibilities. So, character of a Prophet cannot be judged just by plurality of wives but by how he behaves towards them. Sir William Muir writes:

"In domestic life the conduct of Muhammad is exemplary. As a husband his fondness and devotion were entire. As a father he was loving and tender. In his youth he lived a virtuous life; and at the age of twenty-five he married a widow forty years old, during whose lifetime for five and twenty years he was a faithful husband to her alone."⁴

Professor Laura Vaglieri writes in defense of the Prophet Muhammad's multiple wives:

"Enemies of Islam have insisted in depicting Muhammad as a sensual individual and a dissolute man, trying to find in his marriages evidence of a weak character not consistent with his mission. They refuse to take into consideration the fact that during those years of his life when by nature the sexual urge is strongest, although he lived in a society like that of the Arabs, where the institution of marriage was almost non-existent, where polygamy was the rule, and where divorce was very easy indeed, he was married to one woman alone, Khadija, who was much older than himself, and that for twenty-five years he was her faithful, loving husband. Only when she died and when he was already more than fifty years old did he marry again and more than once. Each of these marriages had a social or political reason, for he wanted through the women he married to honour pious women, or to establish marriage relations with other clans and tribes for the purpose of opening the way for the propagation of Islam. With the sole exception of Aisha, he married women who were neither virgins, nor young nor beautiful. Was this sensuality?"⁵

So, my humble request to the reader is that do not judge the Holy Prophet by present day circumstances or according to our individual limited responsibilities, but judge him by realizing the scope of his responsibilities and his eventual achievements. No wonder, Karen Armstrong wrote in her biography, *Muhammad: a Biography of the Prophet*, "If we could view Muhammad as we do any other important historical figure we would surely consider him to be one of the greatest geniuses the world has known."⁶

Endnotes

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Circumcision in Islam

By Lubna Roohi Malik

In his book *Secrets of the Koran*, Don Richardson alleges that Islam endorses and mandates circumcision for both genders. Although it is true that Islam, like Judaism, requires male circumcision, Islam's legal sources of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet in no way mandate female circumcision. This brief article will explore the reasons for male circumcision and those against female circumcision.

Male Circumcision

Male circumcision, also known as *khitân*, is an Islamic ritual indicating purity. Although the Qur'an does not mandate this practice, male circumcision is a practice that introduces males to Islam and is common among all Muslim men. Prior to the advent of Islam, male circumcision was practiced by the Jews, many Christians, and many Arabs. The Holy Prophet and his sons were also circumcised. The hadith on male circumcision indicate that this practice is *fitra*, or the act of a refined person. Thus, since the beginning of Is-

lam, male circumcision has been considered a religious norm. Among the various schools of Islamic thought, the Hanafis and Malikis believe it to be a practice of the Prophet^{saw} and highly recommended, whereas the Shafi'is and Hanbalis believe it to be required. There are some small fringe Muslim sects that reject male circumcision all together because it is not mentioned in the Qur'an.

In support of the vast majority of Muslims who believe it is highly recommended or obligatory upon Muslim men is scientific evidence that male circumcision is necessary for proper hygiene. In fact, recent medical experts have proven that the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease is greatly minimized for circumcised males.

It is also important to note that unlike Richardson's allegation, male Muslim converts are not required or expected to become circumcised. The majority of Muslims circumcise their infant children within the first seven days of their birth. When done at an older age, circumcision is done under a local anesthetic. It is entirely the choice of the new convert whether or not to be circumcised. In fact, in Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith, it is related that when Hadhrat Salman accepted Islam, the Prophet did not ask him to undergo circumcision.

Female Circumcision

Female circumcision, commonly known as female genital mutilation, is culturally practiced in some parts of Asia, Africa, and South America. Widely condemned by international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization, this practice creates a lot of health problems for women who undergo it and induces a lot of pain during child-

birth and intercourse, and can even cause death in some cases. This practice predates Islam and is first found in the 160s BC in Egypt.

Contrary to Richardson's allegations that Islam encourages female circumcision, there is no basis in Islamic law—either in the Qur'an or five of the six authentic books of Hadith of the Prophet—supporting this harmful practice. Recognizing the heinousness of this act, the highly respected Sunni Muslim Al Azhar University in Egypt has rejected any notion that female circumcision is Islamic and the nation of Egypt has formally banned this practice. Some Islamic schools of law, such as the Shafi'is and Hanbalis, believe the act to be not forbidden.

It is only in one of the authentic books of Hadith, Sunan Abu Dawud, and later Islamic sources that female circumcision is mentioned. The two instances in Sunan Abu Dawud where the Prophet is quoted as speaking on these practices, the Prophet says to “not cut off too much, as it is a source of pleasure for the woman and more liked by the husband,” and that “circumcision is a Sunnah for a man, and a source of respect for a woman.” In the non-canonical historical Islamic texts, two main examples are often cited: first, when Hadhrat Uthman, the third caliph of Islam, ordered the circumcision of two female slaves for their purification because they had come to him to accept Islam; second, when the nieces of Hadhrat Ayesha, the wife of the Prophet, were being circumcised, and Ayesha allowed for entertainment of the girls during their circumcision.

Thus, in terms of Islamic sources of law, there is only one authentic book of Hadith that mentions female circumcision; the other five, and much more au-

thentic books, do not speak of this practice. Further, Sunan Abu Dawud states that the aforementioned *ahadith* are *da'if*, or substandard and greatly varied, thus not to be strongly relied upon. Additionally, the Prophet of Islam was very detailed about all aspects of a Muslim's life, including internal processes such as menstruation; thus, it is highly unlikely that he would overlook something as allegedly important as female circumcision. Even the wives of the Prophet who often elucidated on practices relating to the women never mentioned anything relating to female circumcision. Thus, the Prophet who did not forbid female circumcision but did go so far as to instruct a woman who circumcised girls to not cut it all off because there is benefit in *not* circumcising girls, could not possibly have endorsed this practice as required by Islam. The women of the Prophet's time knew that the Prophet was averse to the practice, but as there was no Divine commandment forbidding it, he simply advised tempering the process to safeguard the well-being of the woman being circumcised.

Even the historical Islamic instances aforementioned raise common sense concerns. Hadhrat Uthman was clear that during the time of the Prophet when women accepted Islam, they were not told to undergo circumcision, but merely to offer prayer and stay away from idolatry. Why, then, would Hadhrat Uthman—the third rightly guided successor of the Prophet—require a convert to Islam to be circumcised for purification?

As illustrated in discussions both on male and female circumcision, the former was certainly endorsed and encouraged by the Prophet and former prophets, such as Abraham, whereas the latter was not only *not* endorsed by the Prophet, but was tempered and controlled because of its harmful effects. So many hundreds of years ago, the Prophet of Islam knew of the ill effects of female circumcision and warned against it that science now can show. How could Islam possibly endorse this practice? It makes little intuitive sense. ♦

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Islam & Slavery

By Uzma Javeed

Slavery is the state in which one person comes under the complete domination of another. A slave is one who surrenders all that is of his own, including his body, life, family, and all else to the control of another. He becomes the property of his owner. The slave is destined to live under his master; enjoying whatever rights and privileges that is allowed to him by his owner.

The Holy Qur'an brought the slave and master onto the same plane of psychological awareness. Thus, it opened up ways for achieving freedom and enabled the slave to protect that freedom once attaining it. The Holy Qur'an states:

"Have We not created for man two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and have We not shown him the two great ways of evil and virtue? But he attempts not the high mountain road. And what should make thee know what the high mountain road is? It is the setting free of a slave, or the feeding in a day of hunger an orphan who is of kin or a poor man cleaving to the dust."

The simplicity and excellence of the teachings of Islam, combined with this special injunction about slaves, made a deep impression upon the slaves of Arabia who began to call upon the Holy Prophet as a deliverer. The new religion spread rapidly among the slave population and the proportion of slaves was extraordinarily large among the early converts.

Even in the earliest days of Islam, slaves were not treated with contempt in Muslim society. Abu Zar^{ra}, a companion of the Holy Prophet^{saw} relates that the Prophet used to say:

"Your slaves are your brethren. So if any one of you happens to have a slave, give him the same food that he himself eats, and the same clothing that he him-

self wears. And do not give them such work as is beyond their power to perform, and if you ever happen to give them such work, you should help them in doing it."

The words, "you should help them in doing it," means the work given to the slaves should be of such a nature that if the masters had to perform it, he would not find it disgraceful.

Greater than this, however, Islam aimed at the total emancipation of slaves and visualized the day when slavery would be extinct. A prime example is Hadrat Bilal^{ra}, a black slave from Ethiopia who converted to Islam. One of the most trusted and loyal companions of the Holy Prophet^{saw}, Hadhrat Bilal^{ra} has a fascinating story:

When Bilal Ibn Rabah^{ra} was sold to Master Umayyah ibn Khalaf, he was only a small boy. His master would always remind him, "I am your owner, and you are my slave, you must obey me because your god has been made from wood and mine is from gold. This is the god's will." ... One day he [Bilal] overheard his master talking about a man claiming that there is only one God. [His master said,] "Do you know what this means? It means that I, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, the noble person of Makkah and Bilal al-Habashi^{ra}, the ignorant black slave, must have the same God... Is that possible?" ... Bilal Ibn Rabah^{ra} was inspired by the idea of one God, [and] ... decided to meet Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. Upon seeing the Holy Prophet^{saw}, Bilal Ibn Rabah^{ra} had discovered the truth and immediately accepted the religion of Islam. ... When Umayyah ibn Khalaf discovered what his own "slave" had done, he tortured him. He physically abused him in many ways, yet Hadrat Bilal^{ra} simply said "absolute oneness...absolute oneness" throughout all the pain.

As was the common case for so many former slaves in the early Islamic period, Hadhrat Bilal^{ra} was eventually bought and freed by Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra}. Thus, Hadhrat Bilal's story is only one of myriad examples of the torture that slaves endured prior to Islam, and the great respect, freedom, and love they enjoyed after accepting Islam. ♦

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Compilation of the Holy Qur'an Into a Text

Zia H Shah MD

Professor Theodor Nöldeke, the well-known Orientalist writes, "Since the use of the Koran...is much more extensive

than...the Bible..., it [the Koran] has been truly described as the most widely-read book in existence. This circumstance alone is sufficient to give it an urgent claim on our attention."¹ As non-Muslims begin to learn about the Holy Qur'an, one of the immediate issues is how it was compiled. Reginald Bosworth Smith gave four lectures in 1874 before the Royal Institution of Great Britain, which took on a book form titled *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*. He wrote in this book, "In the Koran we have, beyond all doubt, the exact words...without subtraction and without addition. We see with our own eyes [the] birth and adolescence of a religion."² Sir William Muir agrees with this position. In 1885 he was elected the Principal of Edinburgh University and held the post till 1903. He writes, "There is otherwise every security, internal and external, that we possess a text the same as that which Mahomet himself gave forth and used...The conclusion, which we may now with confidence draw, is that the [Quranic] editions of Abu Bakr and of Othman were not only faithful, but ... complete.... We may upon the strongest presumption affirm that every verse in the Coran...is the genuine and unaltered composition...."³

The Holy Qur'an predicted very early in the ministry of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, "Surely, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and we will, most surely, safeguard it." (Al Qur'an 15:10). The chapter of the Qur'an with this promise was revealed at Mecca (Nöldeke) when the life of the Holy Prophet and his followers was extremely precarious. It was then that disbelievers were challenged to do their worst to destroy it and were warned that God would frustrate all their designs because He Himself was the Guardian of the religion and its scripture, the Qur'an. The challenge was open and unequivocal and the enemy strong and ruth-



less, and yet the Qur'an remained safe against corruption and interpolation and has continued to enjoy perfect security. This distinction of the Qur'an is not shared by any other revealed Book. Especially in the case of the Bible, new research has established beyond doubt that it is nowhere close to the Holy Qur'an in this distinction. Some of this information is covered in two History Channel documentaries entitled *Banned from the Bible I* and *Banned from Bible II*.

The Qur'an was written by the scribes during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. It was collected in a book form in the time of his first Caliph, Abu Bakr^{ra}, and the master copy was stored with the Prophet's widow, Hafsa^{ra}, who was daughter of the second Caliph, Omar. John Davenport has given a summary of this process:

"While Mohammed lived, the Koran was kept in loose sheets only. His successor, Abu-Bekr, first collected them into a single volume, not only from the palm leaves, skins, and shoulder-bones of mutton whereon they had been written, but also from the mouths of those who had committed them to memory; and, when the transcript was completed, the keeping of it was entrusted to Haphsa [Hafsa], the daughter of Omar, one of the widows of Mohammed, in order for its being consulted as an original."⁴

Sir William Muir testifies to the compilation and preservation of the Holy Qur'an in a detailed appendix to his biography of the Prophet Muhammad. In the 1878 edition of his book *the Life of Mahomet from original sources* there is a very detailed description of how the text of the Holy Qur'an was preserved early in its history.⁵ Coming from a non-Muslim who wrote this after an extensive study of the Hadith and the early biographers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}, it becomes assuring research that the Holy Qur'an has indeed been preserved for all these centuries. Below is a Reader's Digest version of his testimony from one of his other books:

"But by degrees variety crept into the many transcripts from this compilation, and the Caliph Othman was persuaded to apply a trenchant remedy. Zeid^{ra} [the chief amanuensis of the Prophet] was appointed to the recension of his former work [of seeking out the various Suras as they were written on palm leaves, tablets, and the minds of men]; and as the differences were mainly of dialect and expression, a syndicate was nominated of three Coreish [Quraish] authorities to act as final judges in the matter. The various readings were searched out from all the provinces of the Empire, and the new collection was as-

simulated to the pure Meccan dialect in which Mahomet had given utterance to his inspiration. Transcripts were then multiplied, and forwarded to the chief cities as standards for reference. All previous copies were called in, and committed to the flames. The recension of Zeid has been handed down unaltered. So carefully has it been followed, that there is but one and the same Coran in use throughout the vast bounds of the Mahometan world. Various readings are almost unknown. The few limitations are almost entirely confined to the vowel forms and the diacritical points, which, having been invented at a later period, formed no part of the original or of Zeid's recension.

There is every security that the work of Zeid was executed faithfully and, indeed, the acceptance of Coran by Ali and his party, the antagonists of the unfortunate Othman, is the surest guarantee of its genuineness.”⁶

Although Muir's political analysis of 'Ali is a complicated issue, it is clear that there was a consensus about the security and the preservation of the text of the Holy Qur'an among the early Muslims after the death of the Prophet Muhammad^{aw} and that consensus has continued among all Islamic sects. Every Qur'an in the entire world will have exactly the same number of chapters and verses in exactly the same order.

Professor Nicholson, says in his *Literary History of the Arabs*, “the Koran is an exceedingly human document, reflecting every phase of Muhammad's personality and standing in close relation to the outward events of his life, so that here we have materials of unique and incontestable authority for tracing the origin and early development of Islam—such materials as do not exist in the case of Buddhism or Christianity or any other ancient religion.”⁷

Professor Theodor Nöldeke writes, “Slight clerical errors there may have been, but the Qur'an of Othman contains none but genuine elements.... Efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Koran have failed.”⁸

It has become an inconvenient truth for the Christian apologists that the fact that the Bible is not the literal word of God has become an open secret in this information age. Bart D. Ehrman, Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina and author of twenty different books including his most recent *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them)*,



This above pictured manuscript—known as “Mushaf of Othman”—held by the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, is the earliest existing written version of the Qur'an.⁹

is a specialist on the New Testament and has shown scores of internal contradictions in the Bible. If the Holy Qur'an had not been from God and had not been preserved, it would have had contradictions and interpolations in a similar fashion. But history is a witness that it is not so. The Holy Qur'an says, “Will they not, then, meditate upon the Qur'an? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much disagreement.” [Al Qur'an 4:83]

This above pictured manuscript—known as “Mushaf of Othman”—held by the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, is the earliest existing written version of the Qur'an.⁹

The Bible had a temporary role in human history. If it had been meant for all times to come, the Omniscient and Omnipotent God who revealed it would have also ensured its preservation. He did exactly that in the case of the Holy Qur'an.

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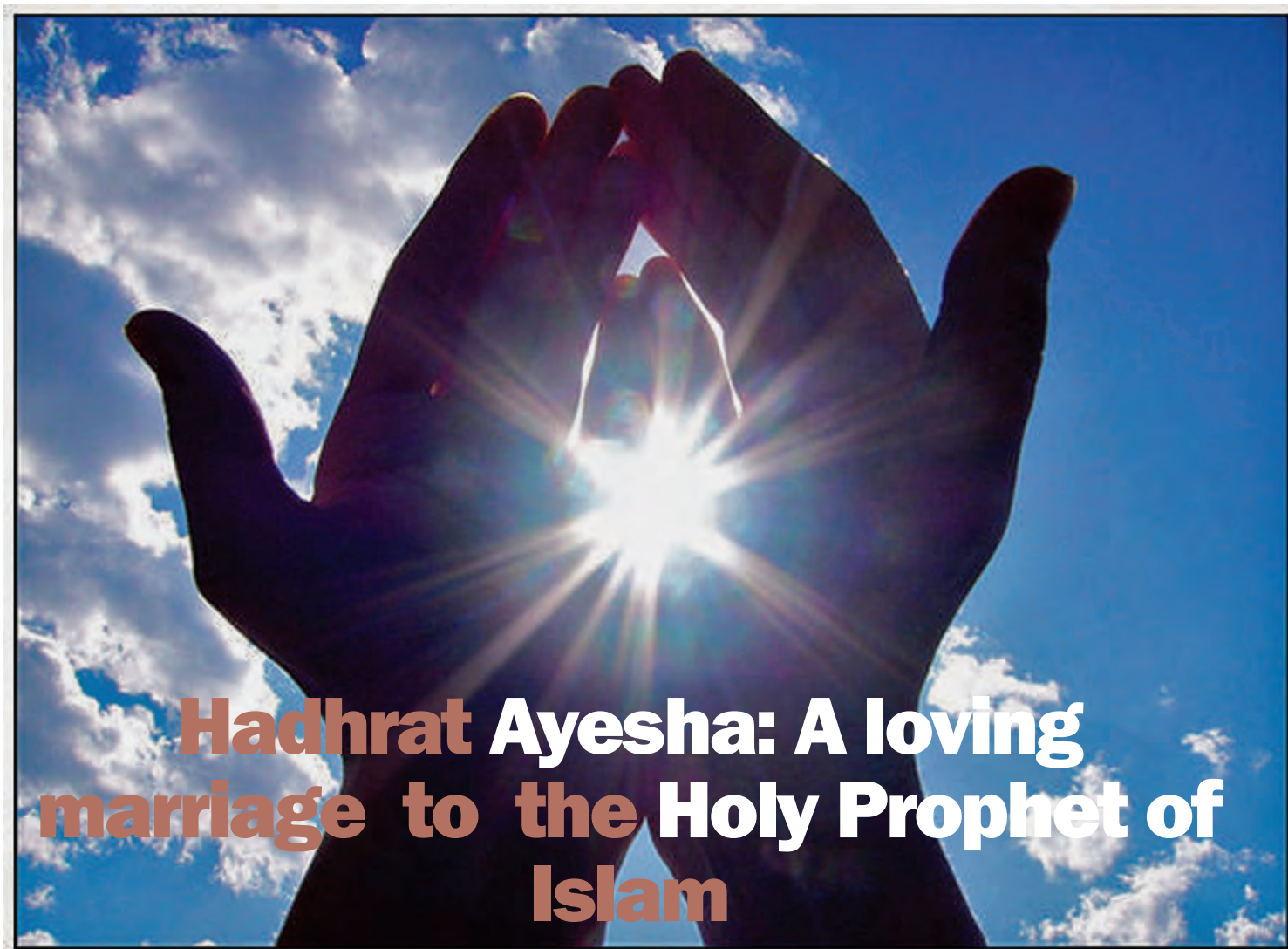
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Hadhrat Ayesha: A loving marriage to the Holy Prophet of Islam

Khaula Rehman, MD

Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra} was the third wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} and the daughter of Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra} and Hadhrat Zaynab^{ra} (Um Rumaan). She was young when she married the Holy Prophet, but her age was never an issue until it has recently become an issue for Islamophobic writers. It is important to note that any Hadith which does not conform to the teachings of the Qur'an should be rejected for the obvious reasons that the Qur'an is the word of God and has been precisely preserved, whereas the *Ahadith* are collections of sayings of the Holy Prophet^{saw} recorded long after the Prophet's death.

Looking at truly authentic sources, the Holy Qur'an states:

'And assess the orphans until they attain the age of marriage; then, if you find sound judgment in them, release their property to them.' (Al Qur'an 4:7)

Thus the Qur'an gives a clear definition of adulthood and marriageable age— when one has attained a good measure of mental maturity. As such, the property of the orphans must be handed over to them when they have mature intellect to properly manage it. So the Qur'an rejects the marriage of immature girls and boys as well as entrusting them with serious responsibilities.

Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra}, when asked to describe the Prophet's character, answered that his character was the Qur'an (Abu Dawud). What he did was what the Qur'an taught; what the Qur'an taught was nothing else than what he did. Thus, the Holy Prophet^{saw} could not have married a little immature child as it is against the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

Most historians agree with the following dates in the history of Islam:

610 AD: Islam was founded when the Prophet received his first revelation

615 AD: Muslims migrated to Abyssinia.

621 AD: Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra} was engaged to the Prophet Muhammad^{saw}.

625 AD: Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra} was married to the Prophet.

The time before Islam is known as the time of ignorance. Tabari in his treatise on Islamic history, reports, "In the time of ignorance he [Abu Bakr] married Um Rumaan. ... She bore him Abdul Rahman and Ayesha. All of his four children which are mentioned here were born during the time of ignorance."¹ There is a fifteen year period from the beginning of Islam to the marriage of the Prophet with Ayesha. If Ayesha was born before Islam, thus in the time of ignorance, then she was at least 15 years old at the time of her marriage.

One hadith states that Ayesha said: “This revelation: ‘Nay, but the Hour is their appointed time (for their full recompense), and the Hour will be more grievous and more bitter’ (54:47) was revealed to Muhammad at Makkah while I was a playful girl.’”^{2 3} The general consensus is that Chapter 54 was revealed eight years before migration to Medina, indicating that it was revealed in 615 AD. If Ayesha was a young girl of even 4 or 5 in 615 AD when this chapter was revealed, she would have been 14 or 15 at the time of marriage.

Similarly, Ibn Hajar, a famous historian, writes, “Fatima daughter of the Holy Prophet^{saw} was born at the time the Ka’bah was rebuilt, when the Prophet was 35 years old. ... She was five years older than Ayesha^{ra}.”⁴ If this statement is factual, Ayesha^{ra} was born when the Prophet was 40. Thus, Ayesha would have been 15 when she married the Prophet.

According to most historians, Asma, Ayesha’s elder sister was 10 years older than Ayesha^{ra}. It is narrated that Asma died at the ripe old age of 100 years, 73 years after the migration to Medina. Thus, Asma would have been 27 at the time of the migration, and Ayesha^{ra} would have been 17. Under this explanation, Ayesha^{ra} would have been married at 19, two years after migration.⁵

Interestingly, Ayesha^{ra} was engaged to Jubayr Ibn Mutim before the Holy Prophet^{saw}. According to Tabari, Ayesha’s father, before migrating to Abyssinia in 615 AD, tried to spare her the dangers and discomfort of the journey by solemnizing her marriage to her fiancé. However, the engagement was broken by the bridegroom’s father in fear of persecution because Abu Bakr^{ra} had accepted Islam. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that if Ayesha^{ra} was ready to take the responsibility of a wife in 615 AD, she was definitely not a little child ten years later when she married the Prophet.

After the death of the Prophet’s first wife, Khaula came to the Prophet advising him to marry again. The Prophet asked her regarding the choices. She said, “You can marry a *bikr* or a *thayyib*.” When the Prophet asked the identity of the *bikr* she mentioned Ayesha’s name. *Bikr* is used for a fully grown and mature virgin lady, not a child. *Thayyib* is used for a woman who has been divorced or widowed. This also

Ayesha’s marriage at a young and impressionable age and the mutual love and harmony of her marriage helped her idealize her husband and his teachings to such a degree that she became a perfect student and an ideal teacher for generations to come.

illustrates that Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra} was not a little child at the time of her marriage.

Thus, according to various accounts, Ayesha’s age at the time of her marriage to the Prophet was between 15 and 19.

Fifteen hundred years ago there was no system of formal education for children spanning a period of a decade or two. As soon as children were able they would learn the trade of their father or household work from their mother, they were married. Ayesha’s marriage at a young and impressionable age and the mutual love and harmony of her marriage helped her idealize her husband and his teachings to such a degree that she became a perfect student and an ideal teacher for generations to come. She enjoyed a status in the society far greater than any first lady or queen. She was the mother of all the believers and was renowned for her intelligence, wisdom, learning and knowledge. Her unique status enabled her to narrate more than 2200 sayings of the Holy Prophet about all aspects of the religion.

The accounts which describe Ayesha to be 9 at the time of her marriage can be traced to one person, Hisham Ibn Urwah. Hisham lived in Medina for the first 71 years of his life. His students included people like Malik Ibn Anas. Not a single person from Medina has corroborated this account. Hisham then migrated to Iraq. It is

from there that we find these accounts in some books. Tehzeeb al-Tehzeeb, one of the most well known books on the life and reliability of the narrators of the traditions ascribed to the Holy Prophet^{saw}, reports that, “narratives reported by Hisham are reliable except those that are reported through the people of Iraq.” It further states that Malik Ibn Anas also objected on those narratives of Hisham which were reported through people of Iraq.⁶ Meezaan al-Aitidaal, another book on the narrators of the traditions of the Prophet reports that when he was old, Hisham’s memory suffered quite badly.⁷ Thus, it seems that Hisham’s memory had failed at that advanced age and he could not remember details.

The people who take pity on Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra} should not forget that she took pride in being his wife. In fact, all the Prophet’s wives tried to surpass one another when it came to showing their love to him. It is related that before his demise, the Prophet told his wives that whoever has longer hands amongst them will meet him first in paradise. His wives took it literally and began to measure the length of their hands. The Prophet smiled and said that by long hands he meant the one who was more generous. Such was the standard of love, care and respect the Prophet’s wives had for him.

At another time, after the demise of the Prophet, plain bread of finely ground wheat flour was presented to Hadhrat Ayesha^{ra}. Instead of eating the bread and enjoying its softness, she tearfully recalled that the Prophet all his life ate very hard bread made out of handmilled crushed wheat, and that, too, was often not enough to satiate his hunger. Hence she could not eat it out of grief. This is not the face of a forced marriage, but the memory and love of an affectionate and exemplary relationship.

Endnotes

¹ Tareekh-e-Tabari Vol 1 Part-II, P-250.

² Sahih Bukhari. Vol.6, book 60, hadith 399.

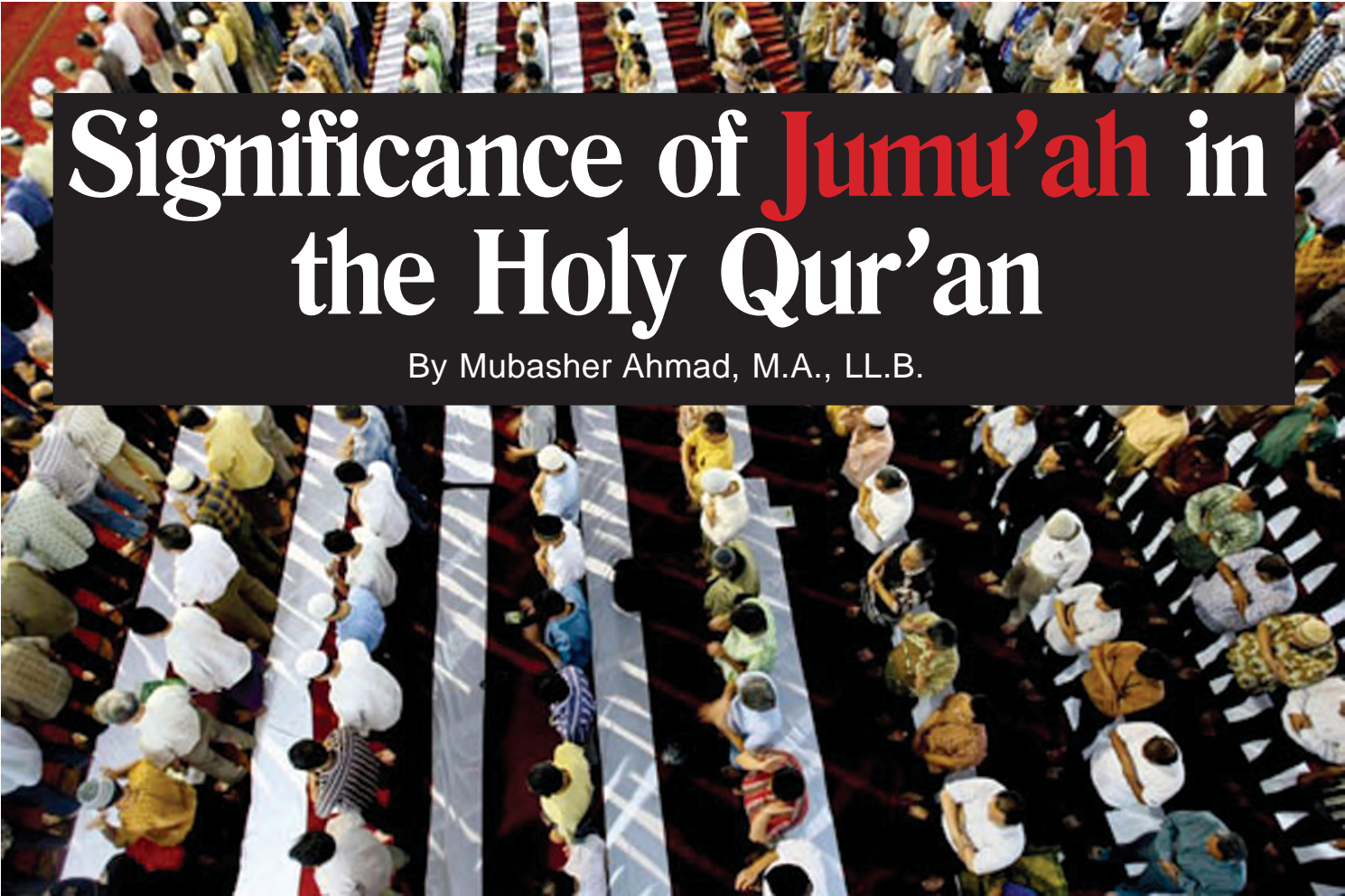
³ <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/bukhari/>

⁴ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Vol 4, Pg 377.

⁵ Ibn Kathir, Vol 8, Pg 371, Taqribu’l-tehzib, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, Pg 654.

⁶ Tehzeeb al-Tehzeeb Vol. 11, pg. 48 - 51.

⁷ Meezaan al-Aitidaal. Vol. 4, pg. 301 - 302.



Significance of **Jumu'ah** in the Holy Qur'an

By Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B.

The chapter of the Holy Qur'an entitled *Al-Jumu'ah* (The Friday) shows how important it is for Muslims to participate in the worship of God and keep themselves saved from being absorbed in materialism.

The Quranic injunction to observe the *Jumu'ah* (Friday) prayer should not be confused with the Jewish observance of the Sabbath. While the Sabbath is a day of total rest for the Jews, *Jumu'ah* is a special day for congregational prayer during a working day. Concerning the Jewish sacred day of Sabbath, the Qur'an refers to the incidents when the Israelites violated its sanctity, incurring the wrath of God. For them Saturday was fixed as the Sabbath — a day to not engage in any worldly work. This day was to be spent with family in joyfulness, prayers and spiritual contemplation. As the Sabbath is the

most important day in the Jewish calendar, so, too, is Friday the best of all days of the week for Muslims.

For Muslims, observance of the *Jumu'ah* prayer comes at noon. Muslims are asked to leave aside all business and social enterprises when the call to prayer is made in the middle of the working day. However, Muslims are allowed to work before and after the *Jumu'ah* prayer time. The Qur'an (2:66; 4:48) reminds the People of the Book that their disregard in observing the Sabbath had serious spiritual consequences for them.

The obligation to observe the Sabbath was included in the Ten Commandments. Thus the Qur'an makes the reference that

God had commanded the Jews: "Transgress not in the matter of Sabbath!" (4:155). But, as is written in the Jewish scriptures, at times the Jews *did* transgress and incurred the curse of God. However, the Qur'an makes it clear that violating the sanctity of the Sabbath was only symptomatic of their transgressing attitude. God's anger toward the Jews was the result of many other wrongdoings combined together with the desecration of the Sabbath. The Qur'an says that they were cursed "...because of breaking of their covenant, their denial of the Signs of God, their seeking to kill the prophets unjustly, and their saying: 'Our hearts are wrapped in covers'..." (4:156).

The chapter of the Holy Qur'an entitled *Al-Jumu'ah* (The Friday) shows how important it is for Muslims to participate in the worship of God and keep themselves saved from being absorbed in materialism. To understand the significance of *Jumu'ah* prayer, it is helpful to review the entire text of Chapter *Al-Jumu'ah*. It is a short chapter in length with only twelve verses, divided into two sections.

In the first section, God is glorified as the Holy, the Mighty, the Wise, and Lord of immense Grace. Specific mention is made of Prophet Muhammad^{saw} being raised among the unlettered people. At the time the ignorant Arabs were in the depth of immorality, and spiritual values were missing. Greed for materialist gains was rampant. To the illiterate and ill-mannered people of Arabia, the Prophet showed the Signs of God, purified them, instructed them in observing high moral and spiritual values embodied in the Qur'an, and taught them wisdom. Consequently, the Prophet succeeded in transforming the uneducated sons of the desert, making them teachers and spiritual leaders of the world. They ended up establishing a new, benevolent and magnificent civilization.

In Chapter *Al Jumu'ah*, the raising of Prophet Muhammad^{saw} is also mentioned for those who had not yet joined him in Islam during his lifetime. This prophecy illumines that, in the future, the Prophet would metaphorically be present among his people in the latter days to revive Islam. In religious history, evidence of such a miraculous revival is found when Jesus^{sa}, son of Mary^{sa}, was raised as the Messiah among the Jews, 1300 years after Moses^{sa}. Unfortunately, the Jews of Jesus' time rejected their Messiah who was teaching them love of God and fellow humans, and not to desire the material world. The Jews of Jesus' time had forgotten the essence of their religion; they were more inclined to the literal interpretation of their religious law, forgetting the ultimate end—meeting with God. Thus the bookish knowledge of their religious leaders was of no avail to them in recognizing the Messiah who taught them to detach their hearts from love of this world. Chapter *Al-Jumu'ah* explains that the Jews remained engrossed in love of their materialistic pursuits, worldly merchandise and entertainments, and fear

***“O ye who believe!
When the call is made
for prayer on Friday,
hasten to the
remembrance of Allah,
and leave off all
business. That is best for
you, if you only knew.”
(62: 10)***

of meeting their Lord (through death) became merely their hallmarks. Thus, the Sabbath was meant as a last resort for such people who would only give leave to their worldly pursuits when explicitly mandated by God to do so and spend some time in His worship.

In the above Quranic context, the second section of Chapter *Al-Jumu'ah* contains a warning to the Muslims not to follow the example set by the Jews. Instead, it commands observance of the Friday prayer, leaving aside trade, commerce and all worldly entertainments. In the latter days, a vast majority of Muslims would get involved in the craze of worldly pursuits; therefore, the need for stressing observance of the *Jumu'ah* prayer was to increase at the time of their Messiah when they would become like the Jews and become diverted from remembering Allah due to their involvement in trade, commerce or other amusements.

Addressing the believers, the Qur'an makes it clear that it is better for them if they seek nearness of God all the time, and especially at the time

of *Jumu'ah*: “O ye who believe! When the call is made for Prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and leave off all business. That is best for you, if you only knew” (62: 10). After the Prayer is over, unlike the Jewish Sabbath, going back to one's business is allowed, but still the believers are exhorted to remember Allah: “And when the Prayer is finished, then disperse in the land and seek of Allah's grace, and remember Allah much that you may prosper”(62:11).

Thus, true prosperity is found in remaining connected with God, and not with worldly gains and entertainments. “That which is with Allah is better than amusement and merchandise, and Allah is the Best of providers” (62:12). Honesty and fear of Allah should remain ever-present, even when engaged in worldly affairs. There should not be any moment when we may forget Allah, and bring someone else in our heart instead.

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Adam and Eve in the Holy Qur'an

By Nadia Qazi

The story of Adam has always delighted and entranced. For Christians, the story confirms the belief in original sin, and places blame upon Eve. For Muslims, Adam marked the beginning of organized religion for mankind, and was the reason for mankind's battle with the devil. In both religions, Adam is considered to be unique, a first. For Christians, the first man; for Muslims, the first Prophet. Whether examining the story from the Christian or Islamic perspective, it is rich and layered with meaning. Yet some authors, such as Don Richardson, point to the story of Adam in the Qur'an as an example of Muhammad's^{saw} supposedly "flawed" understanding of the Biblical story. Little do they realize that the Quranic version of events is quite practical, drawing on metaphors to explain what really happened, and, most importantly, not placing the blame for the fall of mankind on Eve.

In Richardson's book, *Secrets of the Koran*, he alleges that Muhammad^{saw} demonstrated gaps in his knowledge when relating

certain events from the Bible, including the story of Adam and Eve. He writes, "The Koran would later reveal that he [Muhammad] thought Adam and Eve sinned, not in an earthly garden, but in paradise. Muhammad had the erring couple cast to Earth only after they sinned (see Koran 7:19-24 or 7:20-25)." Moreover, he writes that when God commanded the angels to "submit" to Adam, and Satan did not, that Satan was actually proving he worshipped God alone, and should be applauded. Of course, Richardson is ignorant of the fact that in the Qur'an Satan was never a "fallen angel," but a different creature altogether, made, metaphorically, of fire. Also, the angels were never told to prostrate before Adam in the Qur'an, as they were in the Bible, but to submit to him in the sense that they would work for his mission on earth. This article will explain the *true* secrets of the Qur'an in light of the story of Adam and Eve.

Often authors like Richardson quote Quranic verses with weak translations, or take verses out of context, failing to mention verses that put Islam's message into perspective.

Richardson asserts that the Qur'an places the story of Adam in paradise. Yet, all doubts on this score are laid to rest in the Qur'an when it says in 2:1, "I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth." It was on earth, then, that Adam and all that followed took place. Muhammad^{saw} himself described the Nile and the Euphrates as the two rivers of the garden where Adam lived. The Hadith also place Adam in Mesopotamia.

Later, in the Qur'an it says, "And We did create you and then We gave you shape; then said We to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they all submitted. But Iblis did not; he would not be of those who submit." (7:12). The Qur'an is ripe with figurative language. Events that cannot have literally taken place on this earth are shown to have occurred in a figurative sense. God did not command the angels to fall prostrate before Adam, as Richardson alleges, but that the angels would render every help to Adam. Thus, the angels were commanded to help Adam in his work after Adam was made a Prophet by helping him instill good ideas into the minds of men and exhorting them to accept Adam as a Messenger of God.

Further, Iblis, who was never an angel in the Qur'an, was also commanded to submit. This proves that his inclusion is also figurative. Although the chief angel is Gabriel, the chief of evil spirits is *Iblis*. When *Iblis* refused to submit to Adam, he was degraded from his position. As a *Jinn*, or secret creation of God, *Iblis* had the power to obey or disobey Him, unlike the angels who are created to obey God. The dialogue in the Qur'an between *Iblis* and Allah does not necessarily show they exchanged words. Rather, it conveys the state of things and presents a picture of the conditions that came after *Iblis*'s refusal to submit.

Richardson mentions 7:19-24 and 7:20-25 as problematic. When God commands Adam to dwell with his wife in the garden and to eat whatever he likes except from a certain tree, this garden is not Heaven, but a garden-like place where Adam first lived. As stated, the story of Adam takes place on earth. Heaven is a place from which no one who enters it will ever be expelled (15:49), whereas Adam is made to quit the garden spoken of in this verse. According to the Bible, the forbidden tree was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Yet in the Qur'an, after eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve become naked, which means that, unlike knowledge which is a source of goodness, the tree was a source of evil, making Adam exhibit weakness. The Quranic view makes intuitive sense because to deprive man

of knowledge is to defeat the very purpose for which he had been brought into being. Elsewhere the Qur'an mentions two trees, good trees and evil trees (14:25 & 27). Good trees refer to pure things, and evil to evil things.

The tree metaphor continues in 7:21-23. The tree described is not a tree in the literal sense, but a family or tribe from which he was bidden to keep aloof, because the members of the family were his enemies and they wished him harm. In 7:21, we are told that a certain Satan whispered to Adam and Eve, "Your Lord has only forbidden you this tree, lest you should become angels or beings that live forever." Another reading of the word *malakain* (two angels) is two kings or rulers. This reading is supported in 20:121: "Shall I lead you to a tree of eternity, and to a kingdom which shall never be decayed." The wicked man who is presented as Satan came to Adam and told him the reason God had forbidden him to have relations with his family was because they wished to bring about his downfall; but now, the family felt friendly towards him, the danger had passed, and they would prove a source of strength for him. Adam, however, made an error of judgment, but did not willfully disobey God's commandment. The Qur'an explains, "He (Adam) forgot to observe Our commandment and We found in him no determination to do evil" (20:116). Thus, no blame on Adam, and certainly none on Eve.

It is important to note that this Satan is not the same *Iblis*, chief of the evil spirits, but rather a human with Satanic qualities, intent on leading Adam astray. In the Qur'anic account, God continuously refers to the one who refused to submit to Adam as *Iblis*, while the person who led him astray was Satan. The Holy Prophet tells us that his name was Harith, which literally means a farmer, which is further evidence of his being a human being and not a spirit. Once

this Satan had led Adam astray, Adam's nakedness, or his own weaknesses, became manifest to him. It was Divine Grace which kept their weaknesses from becoming manifest to others. Some of Adam's own

weaknesses had been hidden from him and he came to realize them only after his enemy lured him a way



from his position of security.

Satan had succeeded in causing a split in the community, and, as a result, some of the weaker members left the fold. Adam then gathered together the "leaves," i.e. the youth of the community and began to reunite and reorganize his people with their help. Later, in 7:25, Adam was commanded to emigrate from the land of his birth because enmity and hatred had sprung up between different members of his community. This is further evidence that the "garden"

Satan had succeeded in causing a split in the community, and, as a result, some of the weaker members left the fold. Adam then gathered together the "leaves," i.e. the youth of the community and began to reunite and reorganize his people with their help.

that Adam was told to leave was not Heaven because Satan cannot approach anyone there, and Heaven is a place of peace, not enmity or hatred.

As one sees from the Qur'anic account of Adam, Adam's spiritual journey relates how, from the very beginning of creation, God created man and provided the means for attaining a high spiritual status. In essence, the story of Adam is a story of man's ultimate humanity, frailty, and humble beginnings. ♦

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Endnotes

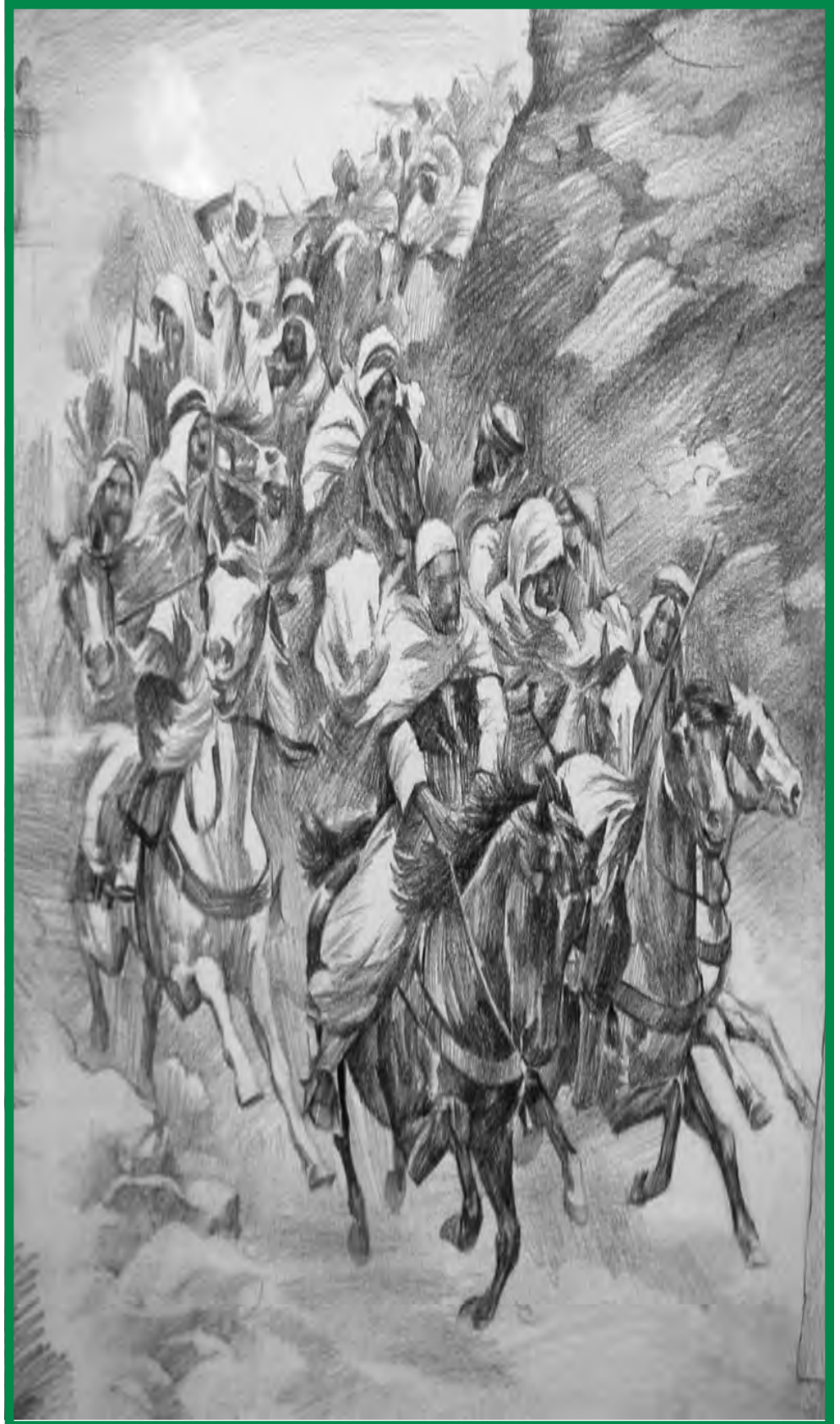
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Battle of Badr

By Naeem Ahmad Rathore

Don Richardson asserts (p. 44) that the Prophet ^{SAW} 'shattered the existing peace' by his raids to intercept and harass Meccan trade caravans. The fact is that after the Emigration the Prophet ^{SAW} concluded friendly agreements with other residents of Yathrib (now called Madinah), which were the several local tribes of Jews and the pagan Arabs, with provision for the common defense. The nascent Muslims community of Madinah comprised of the Emigrants, who had fled from the persecution from the Quraish of Makkah, and members of tribes of local farmers, the Aus and the Khazraj, known collectively as the Helpers or *Ansar*, had pledged to defend God's Prophet ^{SAW} and to protect him as they would their own families. There, too, were some disaffected people including those who had lost their prominent social position owing to the arrival of the Prophet ^{SAW}, as well as the Jews whose preeminent position as People of the Book was now threatened.



The Quraish of Mecca were not content with expelling the Prophet ^{SAW} and continued their efforts of intimidation, coercion and corruption. Their targets for subversion were the disaffected Muslims and the Jews of Madinah. The Muslims had to take precautions and many went to bed fully armed⁴. Other defensive measures included making treaties with neighboring tribes, sending out intelligence gathering reconnaissance parties, and interfering with Meccan trade caravans as they passed near Madinah. The Quraish had to send larger escorts with their caravans and this extra expense served to multiply their determination to do away with the Prophet ^{SAW} and his followers. A state of war, therefore, existed between the Muslims and the Quraish. Alliances and treaties were formed on both sides and there were many skirmishes. The Muslim parties were comprised of the Emigrants.

The Prophet ^{SAW} was seeking an end to the continuous state of fear and insecurity that his followers had to endure; indeed he needed an opening for an era of relative peace so his message of peace and worship of One God could spread in the land.

The Prophet ^{SAW} received intelligence of a Meccan trade caravan that was going to pass near Medina and was under the command of Abu Sufyan B. Harb, and escorted by mounted men at arms. The Prophet called upon the Emigrants and Ansar to form a large party to harass the caravan. Because the intention was not to engage in battle, many were reluctant, or did not think it mandatory, to participate. The Muslim force had 313 men, 70 camels and two horses.

Abu Sufyan got wind of the Muslim's preparations and sent a fast rider to Makkah asking the Quraish to come out in defense of their property. He also changed course and took a longer route through the coastal lowlands to Makkah. The Quraish were elated at the opportunity to defeat the Muslims in battle in defense of their property, while uprooting the young sapling of the new faith. All notables of the Quraish made ready to set off to avail this golden opportunity. The Quraish even arranged a temporary

truce with their belligerent neighbors for the duration of the ensuing conflict. The Quraish had a force of 1000 men, 100 horses and 700 camels.

The movements of the Quraish were not entirely secret to the Prophet ^{SAW}. But his mission required a decisive encounter that would turn the course of events in their favor. He took counsel with his companions and twice the Emigrants and the Ansar rose to declare their willingness to go forward, regardless of the prize value of the caravan. Abu Sufyan had, in the meantime, detoured past the Muslim army. He sent word to the Quraish that, because the property and persons were safe, there was no need for any action and they should go back. This was not, however, what Abu Jahl wanted. He declared, "By God, we will not go back until we have been to Badr." Badr was also one site of Arab fairs where markets were held. "We will spend three days, slaughter camels and feast, drink wine and the girls will play for us. The Arabs will hear that we have come and gather together, and respect us in the future. So, come on." Many other nobles, however, counseled a return. But with cunning and cajoling, Abu Jahl held the majority together. This is a clear refutation of the claim that the Makkans were at Badr to *defend an actual en route caravan*. (p. 126)

The Prophet ^{SAW} and the Muslims continued till they reached the nearer wells of Badr. Because it had rained during the night and made the ground compact on the side near Madinah, the wade across became muddy, making it unfit for cavalry. The next morning, Friday the 17th of Ramadan, the Quraish marched in at daybreak. The armies arrayed themselves facing each other

The claim that the Makkah force 'recognized their clansmen and did not have the heart to kill them' (p. 44) is belied by the following account: The armies arrayed themselves facing each other. The Meccans Utba b. Rabia, his brother, Shaiba, and his son, Walid, challenged the Muslims to single combat. Three of the Ansar eagerly stepped forward. The Quraish, however, would not fight them, and demanded peers from their own tribes. The Prophet ^{SAW} then called upon his second cousin

Obaidah B. Harith^{ra}, his uncle Hamza^{ra}, and his other cousin, Ali^{ra}, to be his champions. Ali^{ra} and Hamza^{ra} dispatched their opponents in a single blow, but Obaidah^{ra} and Shaiba wounded each other. Hamza^{ra} dispatched Shaiba. Obaidah^{ra}, too, died a short while later.

The lines then drew near each other and the Quraish were routed in the first rush. Many of their leaders like Ummaya b. Khalaf and Abul Bakhtari fell. And the chief antagonist, Abu Jahl, too, was killed by two teenage brothers from the Ansar.

Regarding the claim of 'heinous assassinations' (p. 45), there is mention in some books that al Nadr was killed on the way back from Badr due to his personal involvement in the murder of the Prophet's ^{SAW} foster brother, Harith b. Abi Hala.

The Chapter Anfal was revealed to the Prophet ^{SAW} before, during, and after the Battle of Badr. It deals with the mission (V. 5-8, 13-14), the promise of God's help (V. 9-12), conduct during battle (V. 15, 16), the treatment of prisoners (V. 70-71), and the division of spoils (V. 2, 41). The Prophet ^{SAW} was guided in all aspects of building morale of his followers (V. 65, 66), and the salient events are analyzed (V. 42-44). The strategy to be followed after the battle is also outlined (V. 59-64). There is no difficulty in understanding verses 8:13-14, (p. 56) if one believes it to be a revelation from the Almighty to His servant, during, or even prior to, the battle. (p. 55). A plain reading shows the verse to be a record of God's command to the *angels* to inspire the believers during the fighting to kill – strike at the upper part of the neck – or to incapacitate – strike off their fingertips. The recording of the revelation and the sequence of events are well established in the Qur'an and in many authentic *Ahadith*.

Naeem Ahmad Rathore is an engineer and an active member of the Long Island chapter of the AMC, where he resides.

Endnotes

1. Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Ullah* Tran, by A. Guillaume
2. Mirza Bashir Ahmad *Khatimun Nabiyyeen* 1996 Edition

Etymology of the name “Allah”

By Saba Naseem

The dictionary defines etymology as “the study of the origins of words or parts of words and how they have arrived at their current form and meaning. An etymology often shows the different forms the word has taken in passing from one language to another, and sometimes shows related words in other languages.”¹

Etymology of a word in any language other than Arabic often means to find out which language it came from and then how it was altered over time. In Arabic, however, it means how a particular noun is derived from its trilateral verb root. The Arabic word for “name/noun” is itself believed to have been derived from two roots: *s-m-w* meaning to take up a high position and *w-s-m* meaning to mark or brand. The root *s-m-w* means to describe the high station of someone or something, in other words, to assign an attributive name. An attributive name is called a Common Noun and is applicable to all those who have the same attribute. For example, in the Arabic language, the word for scissor is derived from the root

word meaning to cut and translates as “an instrument for cutting.” Therefore, in Arabic the word for scissor is actually a noun for the verb that means to cut: an attributive name.

The root *w-s-m*, however, presents a case in which the name is a ‘given’ name and marks that particular person. For example, a person could be named Leo. This name then uniquely defines that person and is called a Proper Noun in English. The name defines it completely with all its attributes. Interestingly and unsurprisingly, the word ‘Allah’ is a proper noun and not a derived attributive name. It is not derived from any verb root in Arabic, nor is there any word derived from this word in Arabic.

‘Allah’ is an Arabic word that translates as ‘the one and only God.’² Allah has always been ‘Allah’, the proper name of God. In English, the ‘god’ can be used in the plural form and can be feminine, ‘goddess’. ‘God’ can be used as an attributive term to describe a person such as “god-like.” ‘Allah’ is a unique word that has no plural nor can adjectives or nouns be attached to it. ‘Allah’ cannot be used to describe anyone or anything.

Many lexicologists have examined ‘Allah’ in depth to try and find a possible root. In *Lisan al-Arab*, the authoritative Arabic lexicon, they have looked at root words such as *l-w-h*, meaning to shimmer which also means to create. However, they later found that these views have little foundation and are not well known.³ Another meaning of *l-w-h* is to be hidden and it is mentioned that Sibaweh, the father of Arabic grammar, suggested the possibility of *lahun* (derived from *l-w-h*), meaning the hidden one, is the root of ‘Allah’. He based this possibility on the weakness of other arguments and was himself unsure. A more recent and common view is that ‘Allah’ is a contraction of *al* (the) and *Ilaha* (god) to form *Allah* meaning “the God”. ‘Ilaha’ has the meaning of god, deity, or worthy of worship and is derived from the verb to worship. For this contraction, one has to question why the first letter of *ilaha* dropped out to form ‘Allah’. Although many believe that the repetition and usage of *al-ilaha* eventually turned into ‘Allah’. This view, however, is not well established as many of the oldest Arab grammarians do not even consider this possibility. According to the famous grammarian Abu Ali al-Nahwi, the first letter of *ilaha* can never be dropped in Arabic grammar.⁴

The Promised Messiah^{as} says of the word Allah:

“Allah is the name of the Supreme Being, Who is the sole possessor of all perfect attributes and is free from all defects. In the Arabic language, the word Allah is never used for any other thing or being. No other language has a distinctive name for the Supreme Being. The names found in other languages are all attributive or descriptive and are often used in the plural, but the word ‘Allah’ is never used in the plural. It is a simple substantive, not derived. It is never used as a qualifying word. Hence, in the ab-

sence of a parallel word in the English language, the original name “Allah” has been retained throughout the translation [of the Qur'an].”⁵

There are others who trace ‘Allah’ back to the Hebrew name of *Eloh* for God. According to the Columbia Encyclopedia, ‘Allah’ is “derived from an old Semitic root referring to the Divine and used in the Canaanite *El*, the Mesopotamian *Ilu*, and the biblical *Elohim*.” While those names for the Divine are correct, according to *Minan-ul-Rehman*, written by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{sa}, the Promised Messiah, Arabic is the first language and all other languages are derived from it, thus indicating that ‘Allah’ preceded the aforementioned words for the Divine. At the Great Religions Conference in Lahore in 1896, he said:

“We have shown in our book *Minan-ul-Rehman* that the Arabic language is the only language which can claim to be Divine, the foundation from which all sorts of knowledge flow, the mother of all tongues and the first as well as the last medium of Divine revelation. It is the first, because Arabic was the word of God which was with God and was at last revealed to the world from which men learned to make their own languages, and the last, because the last Divine Book, the Holy Qur'an is also in Arabic.”⁶

As mentioned, in the Qur'an Allah revealed the message of Islam to Muhammad ^{sa} with “the language of his people” to spread to all mankind.⁷ It should therefore be noted that ‘Allah’ cannot have been influenced by other languages and that the usage of *El* and *Elohim* in the Bible and Torah actually are derived from ‘Allah’.

Since ‘Allah’ is the proper name for the one God and has been around in pre-Islamic times, one cannot say that the god for Muslims is different from the God for the Jews or the Christians. Allah is the God for all mankind. The name has simply been changed over time to *El* or *Elohim*, but they still refer to the word ‘Allah’, the unique name for God.

Two of the six articles of faith in Islam are to believe in all the prophets of Allah which include Moses^{sa}, Jesus^{sa}, and Abraham^{sa} and to believe in all the books of Allah. Therefore, Muslims do not hold the belief that the God who sent down messengers before the Holy



Prophet was any different than the God who sent the Holy Prophet^{sa} and the Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an states, “And say, ‘We believe in that which has been revealed to us and that which has been revealed to you; and our God and your God is one; and to Him we submit.’”⁸ This clearly states that we all worship the same God. Even in Arab countries today, ‘Allah’ is used by the Christians and Jews to refer to God. Even in the Bible, God is translated as ‘Allah’.

As many people search for a root for ‘Allah’, it becomes clear that they are searching in vain. Generations of Arabic grammarians over thousands of years have not come to a consensus on the derivation of ‘Allah’, but in this day and age, the truth has been realized through the Promised Messiah^{sa}:

To this, then, do thou invite mankind. And be thou steadfast as thou art commanded, and follow not their evil inclinations, but say, ‘I believe in whatever Book Allah has sent down, and I am com-

manded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us is the reward of our works, and for you the reward of your works. There is no quarrel between us and you. Allah will gather us together, and to Him is the return. 42:16◆

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Endnotes

- 1 Encarta Online
- 2 Arabic- English Hans Wehr Dictionary. See root *ʔbʔpʔ*
- 3 See *Lisan al-Arab* Volume VIII pg. 539 under Arabic root *ʔbʔpʔ*
- 4 See Arabic lexicon *Mukhtarul Sihah* Volume I page 9
- 5 Five Volume Commentary of the Holy Qur'an by Mirza Basheeruddin Mahmood Ahmad
- 6 Arabic, The Source of all Languages by Muhammad Ahmad Mazhar, i
- 7 Al Qur'an, chapter 14 verse 5
- 8 Al Qur'an, chapter 29 verse 47

The Holy Qur'an as the Miracle of the Holy Prophet^{saw}

Zia H. Shah, MD

Illiterate himself, scarcely able to read or write, he was yet the author of a book which is a poem, a code of laws, a Book of Common Prayer, and a Bible in one, and is revered to this day by a sixth of the whole human race as a miracle of purity of style, of wisdom, and of truth. It was the one miracle claimed by Mohammed—his 'standing miracle' he called it; and a miracle indeed it is.¹

Reginald Bosworth Smith

Recently, Swiss voters have backed a ban on building mosques with minarets in their country. The Holy Qur'an, revealed in the desert of Arabia in the seventh century, stated that the purpose of defensive warfare is to preserve the sanctity of cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques. The Qur'an named the place of worship of the Muslims as the last on this sacred list.² **Is the Qur'an a miracle or not?**

Religious tolerance is not the only teaching wherein the Holy Qur'an excels. Since 1982 half a million people have died in America in alcohol related traffic accidents.³ The Holy Qur'an emphatically forbids alcohol, saving the believers from this mother of evils. **Is it a miracle or not?**

Similarly, Sir Godfrey Higgins wrote, "By the law of Mohamed all games of chance were expressly prohibited: the beneficial tendency of this law surely no one will deny. He is refused all merit for his morality, because it is said that he only copied it from the Bible. I have not observed the prohibition of this vice either in the decalogue or the gospels."⁴ Fifteen million people now display signs of gambling addiction in America. The Holy Qur'an nipped the evil in the bud. **Is it a miracle or not?**

Sir Godfrey Higgins wrote in the defense of the Prophet, "a philosopher, perhaps, may suspect that when the prophet [Muhammad] was availing himself of the excellent moral precepts of Christianity, he had sense, not only to take the good, but to leave the evil; to adopt the morality, but to avoid the hired priesthood which, in his day, had filled the world with bloodshed and misery, and was rapidly reducing it to a state of the most debasing ignorance."⁵ The Holy Qur'an forbade monasticism in clear terms.⁶ Fourteen hundred years later the Catholic Church is following suit in their negotiation with the Anglican Church.^{7 8} **Is it a miracle or not?**

The Qur'an was revealed in a seventh century tribal society yet it has 800 verses stressing the study of nature. Is it a miracle? It anticipates both the Big Bang and that all living things require and contain water, "Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were

a closed-up mass, then We opened them out? And We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?"⁹ **Is it a miracle or not?**

The Qur'an was revealed in a society where few could read or write, yet its text has been preserved for more than 14 centuries. Such a claim cannot be made for the Bible. These facts are examined in a companion article, *Compilation of the Holy Qur'an into a text*. **Is it a miracle or not?**

The Qur'an issued a historic challenge not only to the contemporaries of the Prophet but to men in all ages: "Were all of mankind to come together and wish to produce the like of the Qur'an, they would never succeed, however much they aided each other."¹⁰ A book attributed to an untaught person and yet no one dares take up the challenge! Professor Laura Vaglieri, who served as professor of Arabic and Islamic Culture at Naples Eastern University, wrote:

"Although the opponents of Islam were invited b30 ILCS 105/5.719 newy Muhammad to compose a book similar to his own, or, at least, a chapter... nobody was able to produce anything which could stand comparison with the Qur'an; they fought the Prophet with arms but failed to match the excellence of the Qur'an."¹¹ **Is it a miracle or not?**

German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said, "As often as we approach the Qur'an, it always proves repulsive anew; gradually, however, it attracts, it astonishes, and, in the end forces admiration."^{12 13} Professor Laura Vaccia Vaglieri explains:

"The miracle of Islam *par excellence* is the Qur'an, through which a constant and unbroken tradition transmits to us news of an absolute certainty. This is a book which cannot be imitated. Each of its expressions is a comprehensive one, and yet it is of proper size, neither too long nor too short. Its style is original. There is no model for this style in Arab literature of the times, preceding it. The effect which it produces on the human soul is obtained without any adventitious aid through its own inherent excellences. The verses are equally eloquent all through the text, even when they deal with topics, such as commandments and

“The Holy Qur’an is not matchless merely on account of the beauty of its composition, but is matchless on account of all its excellences which it claims to comprise and that is the truth, for whatever proceeds from God Almighty is not unique only on account of one quality but on account of every one of its qualities. Those who do not accept the Holy Qur’an as comprehensive of unlimited eternal truths and insights, do not value the Qur’an as it should be valued.”¹⁸

prohibitions, which must necessarily affect its tone. Stories of Prophets, descriptions of the beginning and the end of the world, enumerations and expositions of the divine attributes are repeated but repeated in a way which is so impressive that they do not weaken the effect. The text proceeds from one topic to another without losing its power. Depth and sweetness, qualities which generally do not go together, are found together here, where each rhetoric figure finds a perfect application. How could this marvelous book be the work of Muhammad, an illiterate Arab who in all his life composed only two or three verses, none of which reveals the least poetic quality?”¹⁴ **Is it a miracle or not?**

Bernard Shaw who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925, said, “I have always held the religion of Muhammad in highest esteem because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capability to the changing phases of existence which can make it appeal to every age. I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad, that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.”¹⁵ **Is it a miracle or not?**

I invite the Christian readers in the words of Reginald Bosworth Smith, “to discriminate between the accidental and the essential, the transitory and the eternal; above all, constantly to turn the mirror in upon oneself, and to try to make sure that one is complying with that great principle of Christianity of

judging and of treating others as we should wish ourselves to be judged and treated;” that is, the recipe to judge affairs in a fair and unbiased manner.¹⁶ The Holy Qur’an says, regarding limitless knowledge and insights contained in the scripture, “Say, ‘If every ocean becomes ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof as further help.’”¹⁷

The messiah of this age, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} explains:

“The Holy Qur’an is not matchless merely on account of the beauty of its composition, but is matchless on account of all its excellences which it claims to comprise and that is the truth, for whatever proceeds from God Almighty is not unique only on account of one quality but on account of every one of its qualities. Those who do not accept the Holy Qur’an as comprehensive of unlimited eternal truths and insights, do not value the Qur’an as it should be valued.”¹⁸ **Is it a miracle or not?**

Endnotes

¹ Reginald Bosworth Smith, Muhammad and Mohammedanism, 1889 edition. Page 290.

² Al Qur’an 22:42.

³ <http://www.alcoholalert.com/drunk-driving-statistics.html>

⁴ Godfrey Higgins Esq, An apology for the life and character of the prophet Mohamed or the

illustrious. Year of publication 1829. Pages 35. Printed by G. Smallfield, Hackney. The book is available on the Archive.org.

⁵ Sir Godfrey Higgins Esq, An apology for the life and character of the prophet Mohamed or the illustrious. Year of publication 1829. Pages 30. Printed by G. Smallfield, Hackney.

⁶ Al Qur’an 58:23.

⁷ http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/news/2009/11/091121_anglicans_nh_kv.shtml

⁸ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8405437.stm

⁹ Al Qur’an 21:31.

¹⁰ Al Qur’an 17:88.

¹¹ Laura Veccia Vaglieri. An Interpretation of Islam. First published in 1957. Goodward books, 2004. Page 42-44.

¹² RVC Bodley. The Messenger. Double Day and Company Inc, 1946. Page 237.

¹³ <http://www.alislam.org/Qur'an/Qur'an-and-non-Muslims-20080128MN.pdf>

¹⁴ Laura Veccia Vaglieri. An Interpretation of Islam. First published in 1957. Goodward books, 2004. Page 42-44.

¹⁵ Muhammad and teachings of Qur’an By John Davenport, Mohammad Amin Published by Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1964. Original from the University of California, Digitized by Google.com on Dec 5, 2008, 27 pages.

¹⁶ Reginald Bosworth Smith, in the preface of his, Muhammad and Mohammedanism. 1889 edition.

¹⁷ Al Quran 18:10.

¹⁸ Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Karamatus-Sadiqin, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol. 7, pp. 60-62.

¹⁹ <http://www.alislam.org/Qur'an/>

Abrogation in the Holy Qur'an

By Saira Bajwa



The Promised Messiah^{as's} advent marked a much needed rejuvenation of Islam. Since the demise of the Holy Prophet^{saw}, some Muslims have adopted beliefs which go against the very core of Islam. The Holy Qur'an, which encapsulates the complete teachings of Islam, remains the light for the Muslim ummah. In spite of this safeguard, some Muslims have come to believe that parts of the Holy Qur'an were abrogated, or cancelled out, by other verses of the Holy Qur'an, thus making those cancelled verses unnecessary to

abide by. This belief leads to a situation in which some parts may become abrogated and others may not, leaving the validity of the entire Qur'an open to contention and rendering this Holy book unreliable.

In his book, *Secrets of the Koran*, Don Richardson uses the un-Islamic concept of abrogation to make several accusations against Muslims. Richardson claims that Islam redefines the very concept of God by introducing a Lord whose promises and commandments can be contradicted by His own words, making everything he says open to debate. Richardson

points out that Muslims who believe they have the right to force Islam upon others may simply believe that some verses, such as, "There shall be no compulsion in religion" (2:257), can be cancelled out. Abrogation, therefore, makes it impossible to rely on any Quranic verses.¹

The doctrine of abrogation can be traced back to the middle ages when it was introduced to Muslims on the basis of certain weak Hadith. It is said that the Holy Prophet^{saw} once was reciting the Qur'an in front of an audience of both Muslims and idol-worshippers when Satan inserted his own words in praise of

goddesses. It is said that these words came from Satan but were recited by the Holy Prophet^{saw} as part of the revealed passage. The idol-worshippers prostrated in praise of their goddess, which surprised and then embarrassed the Holy Prophet^{saw}. The incident is completely fabricated but has been accepted by many Muslims, some of whom believe the Holy Prophet would not say such things, and so they offer another version in which Satan interrupts in his own voice, modulated just like Prophet Muhammad's. This fabricated incident has been dubbed the 'lapse of Muhammad'.² Neither version of this fabricated Hadith renders the Holy Qur'an indubitable. If Satan is capable of interpolating revealed speech, then no prophetic revelation can be treated as pure divine communication.

As a solution to this dilemma, Muslim commentators point to 22:53: "But Allah removes the contamination due to Satan and re-establishes His own communication and Allah is Knowing, Wise" This verse is used as proof of abrogation of verses which are not true. This, however, cannot be the solution to verses which have allegedly been tampered with by Satan because if one was to adopt their flawed logic, it could be said that Satan himself had also injected these very words into the Qur'an, thus leaving no guarantee that the Holy Qur'an is the pure revelation from God. This Quranic quotation is in fact complementary to the preceding sentence: "And We have not sent before thee any messenger or Prophet but when he had any messages, Satan mixed up with them his own plan." Many Muslim commentators rely on this verse to declare that Satan adds his own words to divine revelation. Instead of translating the Arabic word 'Umniyah' as 'plan', they translate it as 'messages'. Although the Arabic language allows both translations, the latter translation contradicts the spirit of Islam and is thus incorrect.³

The authority of the Qur'an is also cited by those who espouse this erroneous dogma in 2:107: "Whatever message We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Dost thou not know that Allah has the power to do all that He wills?" Some Muslim commentators incorrectly believe that the Arabic '*ayah*' (message,

sign, command, or a verse of the Qur'an) refers to Quranic verses in this context. Nothing in the verse indicates that the word *ayah* refers to Quranic verses. Both in the preceding and the following verses, a reference is made to the People of the Book and their jealousies against the new revelation, which clearly shows that the '*Ayah*' spoken of in this verse as being abrogated, refers to the previous revelations. It is pointed out that the previous Scriptures contained two kinds of commandments: those which, owing to changed conditions and the universality of the new Revelation, required Abrogation, and those containing eternal truths which needed resuscitation so that people might be reminded of the forgotten truth.⁴ It became necessary, therefore, to abrogate previous revelations which were not universal in scope, and to restore the forgotten revelations. The Qur'an has abrogated all previous scriptures because only it can be a relevant, eternal message for all mankind. This is the sole meaning of this verse which remains consistent with the spirit of the Holy Qur'an.

To say that any part of the Qur'an is abrogated is an accusation against God.

"Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian" (Al-Hijr, 15:10). To accept that God has sent a perfect book for the guidance of mankind and then to accept the concept of Abrogation clearly contradicts the Qur'an and therefore Islam, yet many Muslim commentators have adopted this view. The Holy Prophet of Islam^{saw} warned of a critical time when true knowledge about the Qur'an would disappear until the advent of the Promised Messiah^{AS}:

On one occasion the Holy Prophet^{saw} said:

'O men, acquire knowledge before knowledge disappears.'

Those who heard him asked:

'O Prophet of God, how will knowledge disappear while we have the Holy Qur'an in our possession?'

The Holy Prophet^{saw} replied:

'In the same way in which it happened before. Your mother may have mercy on you. Do you not see that the Jews and the Christians possess their books? But they have not the least regard for the teachings contained in the books, which

their prophets brought to them from God. Knowledge disappears from the earth when those who have knowledge disappear from the earth."

The last sentence the Holy Prophet^{saw} repeated three times.⁵

This disappearance of knowledge is manifested in those Muslims who fail to understand the correct relationship between two verses, and thus conveniently theorize that one verse must cancel out the other. When the true meaning of the verse does become clear, the abrogation theory no longer holds true. Following this pattern, the number of supposed abrogated verses have been reduced from 500 to only five. When Muslims cease to reflect upon the contents of the Holy Book, they are themselves at fault if the meaning of the Holy Qur'an did not dawn upon them. The Qur'an teaches, "None shall touch it except the pure and clean" (56:80). Those who do not possess these qualities will not have access to the deeper meanings of the Qur'an.

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam believes that the word of God cannot be abrogated. The Promised Messiah^{as} States: "The Holy Qur'an is that authentic, pure, and final word of God in which man has absolutely no involvement, not even to the extent of a dot or stroke. In all its contexts, in all its words and meaning, it is from Allah the Exalted in totality and no sect of Muslims has any excuse not to accept it as such. Its each and every word has an excellent order of continuation and succession. It is an immutable revelation- the letters of which have been counted and because of being a miracle in itself, it will always remain safe from any kind of change or interpolation." ⁶

(Endnotes)

¹ Don Richardson, Secrets of Koran. Pages 18, 58

² Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Commentary of Holy Qur'an. Chapter 22, Verse 53.

³ Alislam.org, Misconceptions about the Holy Qur'an

⁴ Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Commentary of the Holy Qur'an. Chapter 2, verse 107

⁵ Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Invitation to Ahmadiyya, page 154

⁶ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Azala Auhum. Vol. 2 page 219

By Abdur Rahman Puthiyavalapp
(Available from Alislam.org)

Reviewed by Humera Bajwa

T*he Belief and the Life in the Holy Qur'an* (2005, 456 pages) is a compilation of the knowledge and teachings found in the Holy Qur'an. It is the result of research undertaken over many years by the author, Abdur Rahman Puthiyavalapp. The content of this book's 20 chapters is expansive, providing proofs for the existence of God, and the Holy Qur'an being the true word of God. The book also details the major themes of the Holy Qur'an, including the attributes of God, the Prophets and the Jinn. What led the author to embark on such thorough research? He explains that he had doubts regarding faith when growing up. These doubts resulted from reading books that distanced him from religion.

Ironically, such a book has recently been published: *Secrets of The Koran* by Don Richardson. This book claims to expose what the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} and the Holy Qur'an were "really all about." *Secrets* was reviewed in the immediate past issue of the *Muslim Sunrise* and served as a catalyst for the present issue's content. *The Belief and the Life of the Holy Qur'an* is a perfect response to the allegations put forward by Richardson, and is a must read for seek-

ers of the truth. As the author himself says, this book was written to explain the true guidance of Islam and its great teachings, and was written for those who misunderstand the religion of Islam and those who keep ill will of it.

Publishers Weekly states that Don Richardson “takes 111 of the Qur’an’s ‘war verses’ out of their historical contexts and claims that this selection proves that contemporary Islam is a dangerous and militant faith.” If however, you are searching for the true instructions given to Muslims regarding war then you would be well advised to read the chapter entitled “The Religion and Religious Wars” in *The Belief and the Life of the Holy Qur’an*. Through Qur’anic verses, commentary and historic accounts, the author helps the reader to better understand the guidance found in the Holy Qur’an.

Richardson claims in his book that the Qur'an commands Muslims to kill those who reject Islam. However, Puthiyavalapp simply explains the relevant verses from the Qur'an and provides evidence from Islamic history to show such verses applied only to those who had relentlessly persecuted and murdered innocent Muslims and become deserving of death for their own transgressions.

Puthiyavalapp opens his chapter entitled “The Religion and Religious Wars” with the statement, “Nobody is allowed to use force for the acceptance of Islam,” as the Qur’an states, “There is no compulsion in religion” (Sura Al Baqarah). He explains that through the Qur’an God instructs Muslims to let him accept Islam who is willing to accept it and let him who is willing to reject Islam, reject Islam (refer to Sura Al Kafirun). There is no clearer way of articulating that force cannot be used to spread Islam. In this well referenced chapter Puthiyavalapp gives details on the conditions under which Muslims are allowed to engage in war. He explains that if the freedom of worship of any party is hindered through the use of force, only then does the Holy Qur’an give permission for a defensive war. This instruction is found in the Qur’an: “And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you” (2:191).

Richardson asserts, "Although Muslims always claim that Muhammad used bloodshed only for 'justifiable self defense', he very definitely was the aggressor!"

Through historic accounts Puthiyavalapp leaves no doubt that the Prophet Muhammad^{saw} engaged in war only when he was commanded to defend himself and his people by Allah. He explains that at the time of the advent of Islam the disbelievers persecuted the Muslims, they expelled them from their houses and stopped them from worshipping at the Holy Ka'ba. The persecution became very extreme but rather than fight back, Muslims abandoned their homes and their properties and migrated to Medina in hope of practicing their faith without further persecution. However, the disbelieving Makkans followed the Muslims to Medina and attacked them there. It was at this point that God gave Muhammad^{saw} the command to fight a defensive war. He quotes the following verse from the Qur'an: "And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and for the rescue of the weak men, women and children- who say, 'Our Lord, take us out of this town whose people are oppressors, and give us a friend from Thyself and give us from thyself a helper.' "

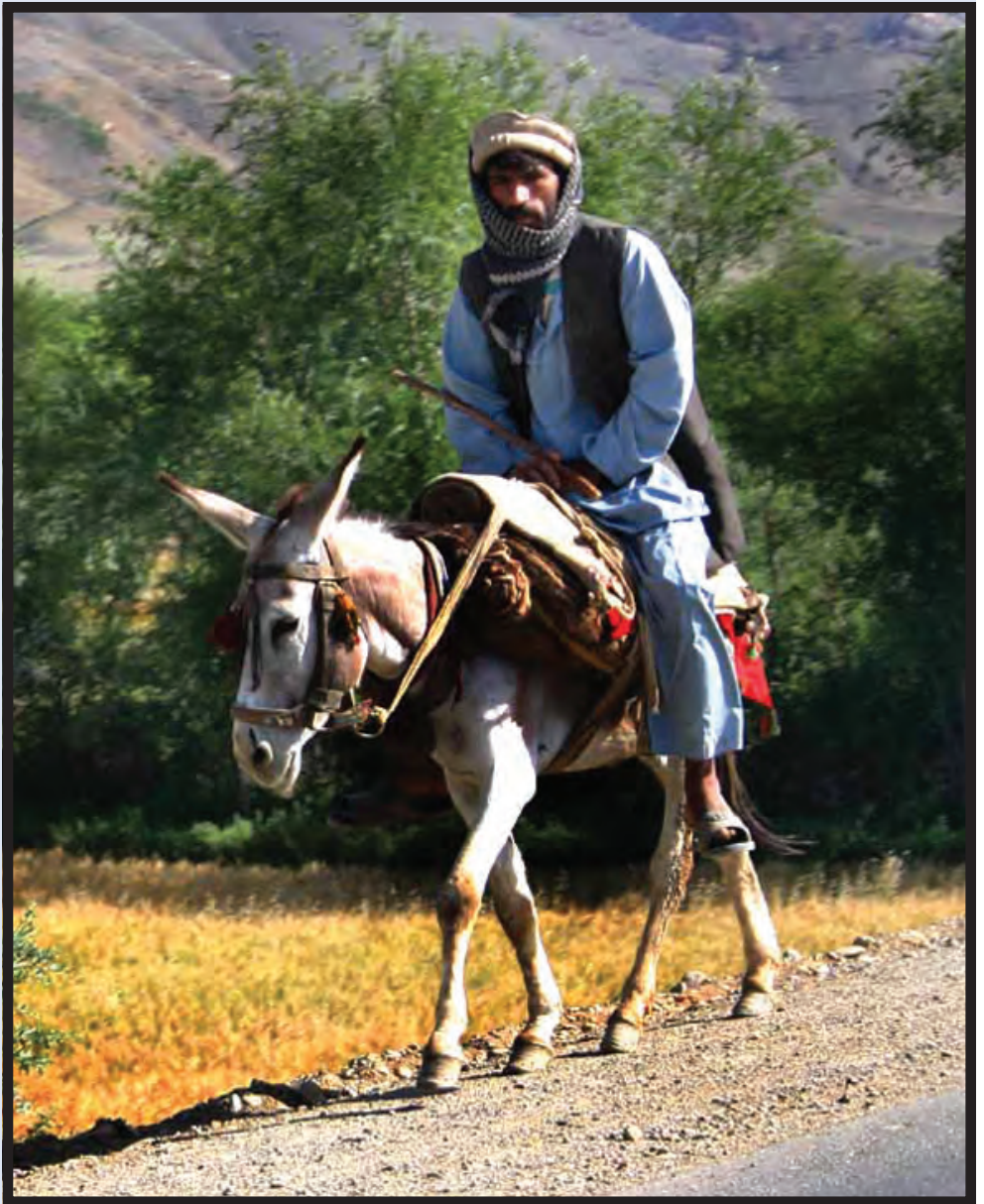
This book is very well referenced and researched. It is clear to see that the author spent a lot of time over many years collating the information provided in this book. Although this book has been translated from its original language, as is noted in the introduction, this book is written in an easily understandable language, therefore the translation does not take away from the content of this work. After comparing both works, the reader can come to just one conclusion: The only secret about Richardson's book is that it is filled with baseless lies designed to misinform, whereas Puthiyavalapp's work can only increase the earnest seeker's understanding about true Islam.

Humera Bajwa has worked as a teacher in England and currently studies Arabic at the Foreign Service Institute. She resides in Arlington, Virginia.

Perspectives: **Mean-spirited** **Criticism**

...there is no end to criticism,
if it is done for the fun of it.

People like to criticize others. Criticism is not objectionable as long as it is not done just for the sake of it. There must be an objective to be accomplished when we criticize someone or something. There is no end to criticism if it is done for the fun of it, as Mullah Nasruddin found out. Mullah Nasruddin is a character, real or fictional is open to debate, but his stories are well established in Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey. One day Mullah went to the market, taking his son with him. There he bought a donkey, and on the way home he let his son ride while he himself walked alongside on foot.



After they had gone some distance they came upon some people who began talking about the pair. "The world is getting crazier and crazier," they said. "That lout of a son is sitting there at ease on the donkey, making his old father walk alongside dripping with sweat."

Mullah heard this comment and had his son climb down, and he himself took a seat on the donkey's back. "Now the people will be satisfied," he murmured.

Soon they came upon another group who likewise were expressing their thoughts about Nasruddin and his donkey, and indeed, loudly enough that the Mullah could hear them. "Have you ever seen anything like that? That must be an unnatural father who makes his poor boy run on foot while he himself rides proudly along on the donkey!"

Mullah momentarily halted the donkey. "Climb up here with me!" he said to his son.

A short distance later they came upon another party, who likewise expressed their opinion clearly. "Such animal abuse! Isn't that shameless, for a cleric to torment such a poor donkey! Couldn't the two of you use your own legs and give the donkey a little rest?"

Mullah stopped once again. "Let's climb off!" he said to his son.

They both dismounted and walked along on foot beside the donkey. But they had not gone far when they came upon another group of people who also had something to say about them. They heaped ridicule upon them:

"Such a cheapskate! It's just like him to buy a donkey and is then too stingy to use the animal."

"He must be afraid that he will rub the fur off its body."

"Which of the three is the greatest donkey?"

"They just might as well carry the donkey home."

No sooner said than done! Mullah Nasruddin followed this advice.

The story ends in different versions. One version is that the Mullah and his son decided to carry the donkey on their shoulders since that was the only scenario left. While they were balancing the donkey crossing a bridge, the donkey fell down in the river. So the episode ended because without the donkey, there was no play.

The Holy Qur'an has stated emphatically many places as a challenge to others that they should try and bring another chapter or even a verse like one in the Qur'an. It is not a statement of arrogance. It simply states that if you have a criticism or objection to any of the teachings on the Holy Qur'an then bring a substitute or alternative and compare the options. In the final analysis, you will find that the Holy Qur'an presents a teaching which is practical, morally sound, logical and in conformity with nature.

In another version, Mullah told his son that you can never please the people no matter what you do.

As soon as the people had gone on their way he said to his son, "If you ever should come into the possession of a donkey, never trim its tail in the presence of other people. Some will say that you have cut off too much, and others that you have cut off too little. If you want to please everyone, in the end your donkey will have no tail at all."

Mullah's stories are repeated to bring up social issues for people to think about. The main thing to note is that all the people who criticized him did not offer an alternative. That is when criticism is useless, non-productive, just for fun and without any objective or purpose.

People criticize the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet of Islam all the time. What is their objective and purpose? What alternatives do they have to offer?

The Holy Qur'an has stated emphatically many places as a challenge to others that they should try and bring another

chapter or even a verse like one in the Qur'an. It is not a statement of arrogance. It simply states that if you have a criticism or objection to any of the teachings on the Holy Qur'an then bring a substitute or alternative and compare the options. In the final analysis, you will find that the Holy Qur'an presents a teaching which is practical, morally sound, logical and in conformity with nature.

When Christians or Jews criticize the Holy Qur'an about the Jihad of the Sword while misquoting it most of the time, what do they offer in its place from the Bible? Read Chapter 20 verses 13 to 20 in the book of Deuteronomy which states that you should kill every male and take unto thyself all women, the little ones and the cattle. It further clarifies by the words: "thou shall save alive nothing that breatheth."

According to the Bible, it is a commandment that was actually followed according to Book of Number 31:7.

Even if you misinterpret the direction of the Holy Qur'an about Jihad, it is much better than the instructions in the above referenced verse from the Bible. The Holy Qur'an commands that once the enemy lays down their arms, make peace with them. The Bible says once the enemy has lost, enslave all women and children, kill all males and cut down all tress other than the fruit trees. Is this the alternative we are invited to?

The same holds true for the Holy Prophet of Islam. Instead of just criticizing him, bring the example of another prophet and let us compare them. The Holy Prophet was an orphan, husband, father, general, soldier, neighbor, statesman and a teacher. Bring an example of someone in any one of these categories and let us match him to the Holy Prophet and see who comes out shining.

I know there are people who are going to keep on criticizing just like the ones in Mullah Nasruddin's town. They only reflect their ignorance and lack of sincerity. The Holy Qur'an tells us that when we meet such people, we should just say *Salaam*, or *Peace be on you*, and keep going.

Of course if Mullah followed this commandment, I would have to look for another story to make my point. I know there are plenty of others around.

Falahud Din Shams

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